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Canada

# Horizontal Evaluation of the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation

Office of the Chief Audit and Evaluation Executive
Evaluation Services Directorate

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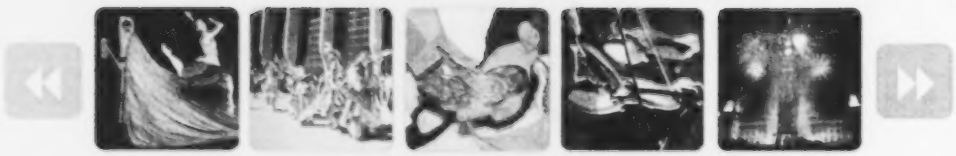

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## List of acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| AHHRI | Aboriginal Health Human Resources Initiative |
| AHRC | Aboriginal Human Resources Council |
| BBM | Bureau of Broadcast Measurement |
| BFF | Blueprint for the Future |
| CEO | Chief Executive Officer |
| CNAF | Canadian Native Arts Foundation |
| NAAA | National Aboriginal Achievement Awards |
| NAAF | National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation |
| PSE | Post-secondary Education |
| RMAF | Results-Based Management and Accountability Framework |
| TP | Taking Pulse |

# Executive Summary

The National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation (NAAF) is a nationally registered non-profit organization that promotes the education and professional development of Aboriginal Peoples, with a particular focus on youth, by providing the necessary tools to assist participants in achieving prosperous futures. The purpose of this report is to present the results of the horizontal evaluation of NAAF. This evaluation study fulfills the departmental commitments of Canadian Heritage, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and Health Canada. The evaluation will cover the 5-year period since program funding renewal in 2005 (i.e., the fiscal years 2004/05 – 2008/09). The core objectives of this evaluation project are to assess the rationale/relevance, design/delivery, success, and cost-effectiveness of the federal funding provided to NAAF to administer programs and services to Canadian Aboriginal Peoples.

## Program Overview

In 1985, Aboriginal composer and musician John Kim Bell created a national not-for-profit organization to promote various forms of art within the Aboriginal community. John Bell named the organization the Canadian Native Arts Foundation (CNAF). From this start, the primary purpose of the organization was to assist and encourage Aboriginal youth to pursue training and careers in the arts.

Following the development of more comprehensive initiatives which spread beyond the arts into education, skills development, and cultural promotion CNAF formally changed its name to the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation in 1997. This new name would more aptly reflect its broadened purpose and vision.

Today, NAAF operates four general activity areas:

- **The National Aboriginal Achievement Awards** – An annual national awards ceremony designed to celebrate and promote the achievement of outstanding Aboriginal individuals, and thus, the community as a whole.
- **The Education Program** – A national system of post-secondary education financial assistance available to Aboriginal students.
- **Blueprint for the Future** – A semi-annual series of large-scale career fairs held in different cities across the country designed to promote different career opportunities to Aboriginal youth.
- **Taking Pulse** – Culturally tailored high school curriculum, presented to Aboriginal students, students who are at risk of leaving school, or have just left school, to promote the importance of education for career development.

Currently, NAAF receives funding from a number of private sector sponsors as well as the federal departments of Canadian Heritage, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and Health Canada. Funding from each of the departments contributes to the achievement of NAAF objectives and also contributes to the outcomes stated in the Results-Based Management and Accountability Frameworks (RMAF) of each department. Funding is

provided to NAAF through two distinct channels: contribution agreements and trust funds.

## Methodology

The methodological approach to this evaluation included the following components:

- An extensive file and document review of a variety of primary NAAF documentation, primary government documentation, and secondary descriptive sources.
- An extensive environmental scan of competing and/or complementary programs and initiatives to those of NAAF.
- Key informant interviews with representatives of each funding department, NAAF senior management, stakeholders involved with the facilitation of BFF and TP, past NAAA recipients, private sector funders, Aboriginal organizations. (n=40)
- A web-based survey of current and past Education Program participants (508 complete responses).
- Two focus groups conducted with current recipients of Education Program financial assistance.

## Evaluation Findings and Conclusions

### *Rationale and Relevance*

The evaluation indicates that NAAF is well aligned with the current needs of Aboriginal Canadians. Furthermore, the objectives of NAAF support the priorities of Canadian Heritage, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and Health Canada regarding Aboriginal peoples.

Canadian Heritage, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Health Canada, and the federal government as a whole have repeatedly expressed a desire to improve the position of Aboriginal Peoples within Canadian society. NAAF has been selected as a mechanism by which this task can be achieved. The findings of this evaluation indicate NAAF does well to approach and overturn several of the negative circumstances facing the Aboriginal population including under-representation in PSE, under-representation in the labour force, and promoting a positive image of Aboriginal Peoples and culture.

In sum, the evidence revealed through this evaluation supports the continued funding of NAAF, as the rationale and relevance for funding the organization and initiatives of this purpose remain strong and necessary.

***Design and Delivery***

The issue of NAAF program reach represents the greatest challenge to the achievement of NAAF's objectives and the objectives of federal government funding. Although findings of the evaluation indicate that NAAF has made significant progress in accurately representing the population in terms of geographic distribution and Aboriginal ancestry, two definable gaps persist. First, is service within the province of Quebec and to French-speaking Aboriginal Peoples. Second, is service to the North and to the Inuit.

However, NAAF has made tangible improvements in bolstering its accessibility to these underserved subpopulations. For one, both BFF and TP activity areas have made planned and successful inroads into the North and Quebec. Moreover, NAAF has improved French capacity over the entire organization, making a commitment to provide all communications and program materials in French upon request. Finally, NAAA and Education Program selection juries have included population sub-targeting as a part of the selection process.

In this context, stakeholders from Inuit groups have suggested a willingness for NAAF to forge stronger relationships with local organizations to administer services to the North. The presence of working partnerships – between northern organizations, which possess an expertise in the needs of the local community, and NAAF, who possesses an expertise in each activity area – represents many potential synergistic benefits, including in the areas of cost and logistics.

A further key finding of this evaluation is the issue of NAAF reporting requirements. On one hand, NAAF officials expressed a degree of frustration with the reporting requirements associated with the funding arrangements they hold with the federal government. The most significant problem they assert is the lack of coordination from one assessment to another. On the other hand, some federal government officials have expressed concern with NAAF's ability to report directly on the requirements that are made of them. No department cited a high degree of difficulty in overcoming this issue through cooperation with NAAF if it had occurred.

Other issues of design and delivery have been effectively managed by NAAF. Aside from the aforementioned issues, evidence shows that all stakeholder groups have been highly satisfied with NAAF design and delivery.

***Success***

Evidence gathered in this evaluation indicates how NAAF activity areas have been proficient in achieving and approaching the majority of the outcomes laid out in the program's logic. The organization has increased the visibility and profile of Aboriginal Peoples and culture within Canadian society – a much needed outcome. Furthermore, among program participants, NAAF has significantly assisted Aboriginal Canadians, notably youth, in improving participation rates in PSE and, moreover, in terms of total educational attainment, two areas in which the Aboriginal population lags significantly

behind the non-Aboriginal population. NAAF has also made significant progress on presenting Aboriginal young people with a broad range of career perspectives and the motivation and self-belief necessary to achieve these outcomes. Overall, NAAF has certainly had a significant positive impact on the Canadian Aboriginal population, especially those who have had direct contact with NAAF's programming.

In general, NAAF program participants hold a high degree of satisfaction with the programs they use. This is a significant finding, as not only does NAAF do well to achieve program outcomes, it does so in a manner that is accepted and celebrated within the Aboriginal community.

Moreover, external observers and experts (government officials, senior officials at other Aboriginal organizations, non-government sponsors) are highly supportive of and satisfied with the achievements of NAAF work.

Nevertheless, from the perspective of the federal government, there is a desire that NAAF draw tangible links between the services it provides and the outcomes it claims to pursue. The TP and BFF activity area are, in some cases, prone to insufficiency on this important criterion. For instance, it is very difficult to postulate a strong degree of positive association between participation in a BFF or TP event and increased rates of educational participation and attainment. In essence, the problem is not in providing a legitimate argument for correlation but in actually tracking what BFF and TP participants are doing prior to participation in these programs. The simplest solution to this issue would be monitoring participant flow from one activity area to another. In this case, flow from BFF and TP to the Education Program. Furthermore, to improve the likelihood that this specific link occurs, NAAF should dynamically promote the opportunities available through the Education Program at BFF and TP events.

***Cost-effectiveness***

NAAF provides the federal government with a highly cost-effective means of achieving many departmental and government-wide priorities and commitments regarding Aboriginal Peoples. Several factors contribute to this experience including NAAF's strong reputation with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples alike, NAAF's network of Aboriginal stakeholders, NAAF's strong relationships with appropriate private sector partners, NAAF's history of success in the area of Aboriginal social development, and, finally, NAAF's current skills base and capacity for performing high-quality work in the field. For the federal government to have a mechanism of such capability and proficiency available for use in pursuing its own objectives represents a considerable cost-savings over providing the services on its own or even through an alternative organization. This is a considerable advantage provided to the federal government in terms of value-for-money.

To a certain extent, the funding provided to NAAF by the federal government is a source of stability for operations. Government funding alone could not support NAAF's current operations; however, the funding provided by the government plays a critical role in

attracting private sector donors. To these donors, a financial support-base from the federal government is an indicator of organizational sustainability and accountability.

## Recommendations and Management Response

1. For federal government funding to be justified as serving the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada, NAAF must continue to make progress on distributing services equitably within the entire Aboriginal population. Improving accessibility for hard-to-reach groups, namely the North and French-speaking subpopulations, must lead to improving actual numbers served.

**Management Response:** Accepted

The Director of International Relations, INAC will take the lead on this recommendation and work with other government departments and NAAF to develop more targeted measures, such as outreach campaigns, specialized advertising, and stay-in-school and high-school equivalency initiatives for Inuit youth, who have lower high-school graduation rates and to produce additional materials in French for French-speaking youth.

**Implementation date:** April 1, 2010

In addition, the Director of International Relations, INAC will work with other government departments and NAAF to develop annual targets for take-up of NAAF programs as well as consistent and detailed tracking procedures. INAC will meet bimonthly with NAAF to ensure that targets are being met and progress is being tracked.

**Implementation date:** January 1, 2010

2. NAAF should explore the possibility and potential of partnering with relevant like-minded organizations. These partnerships should be based on the common goal of improving NAAF service to currently underserved groups.

**Management Response:** Accepted

The Director of International Relations, INAC will work with other government departments, INAC Sectors and Regions and NAAF to develop a strategy for establishing and maintaining working relationships with organizations such as, but not limited to, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) and other regional Inuit organizations as well as L'Assemblée des Premières nations du Québec et Labrador (APNQL) in order to improve ongoing "on the ground" outreach to currently underserved groups, including targets and performance measures.

**Implementation date:** January 1, 2010

3. The federal government should create a single set of reporting requirements for NAAF funding. This will allow the federal government to stipulate a comprehensive set of performance data for review and analysis. Accordingly, it will eliminate the multiple, often competing, reporting demands placed on NAAF and improve the efficiency of the resources NAAF devotes to this task.

**Management Response:** Accepted

This recommendation requires that INAC, PCH and Health Canada coordinate and streamline their reporting and evaluation requirements, while satisfying needs with regard to accountability, value for money and measuring impacts. The Director of International Relations, INAC will work with PCH and Health Canada to establish an interdepartmental working group to identify and assess current reporting demands, and to propose options which will reduce the reporting burden while not diluting reporting standards. This working group will report by January 30, 2010.

**Implementation date:** November 1, 2009

In addition to standardizing reporting requirements across the three departments (INAC, PCH and Health Canada), the Director of APP at PCH will explore opportunities to share data and the PCH reporting templates with other federal government funders, such as HRSDC, in hopes of easing NAAF's reporting requirements while maintaining federal government accountability obligations.

**Implementation date:** November 1, 2010

4. NAAF should scale-up the promotion of the Education Program to participants in TP and BFF. This will support the degree to which intermediate and final outcomes are achieved for both the TP and BFF activity areas. Moreover, in order to improve monitoring and measurement of program success, NAAF should track participant flow from one activity area to another.

**Management Response:** Accepted

The Director of International Relations, INAC will work with other government departments and NAAF through regular multi-party meetings to support NAAF in developing more effective monitoring systems that can better track participant activity prior to and following participation in TP or BFF activities by, for example, establishing participant profiles which can be entered into a database and tracking interactive website use.

**Implementation date**: April 1, 2010

The Director of APP at PCH will support this recommendation by contributing expertise in the development of NAAF's monitoring systems.

**Implementation date:** April 1, 2010

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Context of the Evaluation

The purpose of this report is to present the results of the horizontal evaluation of the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation (NAAF). This evaluation study fulfills the departmental commitments of Canadian Heritage, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and Health Canada on two distinct grounds.

1. In meeting Treasury Board requirements regarding the federal *Policy on Evaluation*.
2. In meeting requirements of the *Federal Accountability Act* regarding transfer payments.

The evaluation will cover the 5-year period since program funding renewal in 2005 (i.e., the fiscal years 2004-05, 2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09). This evaluation is the first multi-department study to be performed since 2003, and will build on the findings of the 2003 evaluation.[1] PRA Inc., an independent research firm, was contracted to perform this current horizontal evaluation.

## 1.2 Objectives of the Evaluation

The core objectives of this evaluation project are to assess the rationale/relevance, design/delivery, success, and cost-effectiveness of the federal funding provided to NAAF to administer programs and services to Canadian Aboriginal Peoples. This report highlights lessons learned under each of these areas and provides salient recommendations for consideration.

## 1.3 Structure of the Report

This report contains five sections, including this introduction. The next section, Section 2, describes NAAF and the environment in which it operates. Section 3 describes the methodology that has been employed throughout the course of the evaluation. Section 4 summarizes the key findings that came to light during the research process. Finally, Section 5 presents conclusions and recommendations.

[1] The 2003 evaluation was intended to cover the 6-year period 1998–2004. The evaluation produced six recommendations that addressed issues such as, funding being made through contributions rather than grants, NAAF program reach, strategic planning, and several others. The 2003 evaluation is available at: Transpolar Technology Corporation (2003) Evaluation of the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, prepared for: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

# 2. Description of the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation

This section of the report provides an overview and description of NAAF. It begins with a brief history of the organization and then provides a summary of the current activity areas that NAAF operates. The following sections outline program logic in light of federal funding, describe the current funding structure, and present a summary of NAAF's financial resources.

## 2.1 NAAF background and overview of current activity areas

In 1985, Mohawk composer and musician John Kim Bell created a national not-for-profit organization to promote various forms of art within the Aboriginal community. John Bell named the organization the Canadian Native Arts Foundation (CNAF). From the start, the primary purpose of the organization was to assist and encourage Aboriginal youth to pursue training and careers in the arts. However, CNAF took the strategic position that by supplementing the vision of the organization with high-profile arts events it would attract sponsorships and corporate donors, which, consequently, would allow for both organizational growth and an increased awareness of CNAF's core purpose across Canadian society.

The first CNAF scholarships were awarded in 1988. The scholarships were aimed at young persons pursuing training in visual art, dance, music, and theatre. In this first year, 21 individuals received a total of $46,185 in financial assistance. Over the following years, CNAF continued with highly successful dance, symphony, and arts events across the country, progressively increasing corporate sponsorships and awareness. This cumulated in a steady rate of growth in scholarship and bursary recipients.

Conceptualized in 1993, the first National Aboriginal Achievement Awards (NAAA) gala convened in 1994 to mark Canada's contribution to the United Nations' declared *International Year of the World's Indigenous People*. The awards event was designed to celebrate the diverse career and lifetime achievements of Aboriginal Canadians. Since this first ceremony, the annual event has grown in terms of scale and status and today represents the premiere Aboriginal award of lifetime achievement. The success and acceptance of the NAAA by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians alike directly contributed to the growth and enhancement of new activities and capacity within the foundation.

In the mid-nineties, CNAF launched Blueprint for the Future (BFF), a series of career fairs held in various locations across the country designed to bring Aboriginal youth into contact with potential professions and professionals they could look up to as role models from their own communities.
Following from more comprehensive initiatives like BFF and in an effort to expand the scope of the scholarship and bursary program to disciplines outside of the arts, CNAF

formally changed its name to the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation in 1997. This new name would more aptly reflect its broadened purpose and vision.

In 2001, NAAF launched its most recent initiative, Taking Pulse (TP). TP emerged as a one-day event attended by hundreds of individuals representing the public and private sectors. These original TP events focused discussion and debate on increasing Aboriginal Peoples' participation in the workforce. The outcome of these events was the current TP activity area that actively approaches Aboriginal youth with ideas and inspiration on career opportunities.

Since the inception of the TP program, NAAF's broad strategic vision has remained relatively consistent. Minor activity area changes have occurred, but the overall direction remains focused on improving the future for Aboriginal Peoples, especially youth. One significant internal organizational change that occurred was when, in November 2004, NAAF CEO John Kim Bell stepped down from his post. Roman Bittman served as head of the organization until Roberta Jamieson was appointed to the position. Roberta Jamieson's appointment has not changed the overall strategy of the organization.

Today, NAAF is a nationally registered non-profit organization that promotes the education and professional development of Aboriginal Peoples, with a particular focus on youth, by providing the necessary tools to assist participants in achieving brighter futures and their full potential. NAAF is located at Six Nations of the Grand River, in Ohsweken, Ontario. The organization receives funding from a number of private sector sponsors as well as the federal departments of Canadian Heritage, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and Health Canada. NAAF operates four general activity areas:

- ***The National Aboriginal Achievement Awards (NAAA).*** Conceptualized in 1993, this nationally broadcasted awards gala honours 14 Aboriginal Canadians by recognizing their outstanding career and life achievements. The awards were established to "encourage and celebrate excellence in the Aboriginal community."[2] The NAAA is the most recognized gala event of its type, with roughly 2,500 participants and attendees. Currently, the NAAA are broadcast by the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network and Global Television in a 90-minute special.
- ***The Education Program.*** NAAF is the largest non-government funding source for Canadian Aboriginal post-secondary students. The Education Program, which began in 1985, is designed to enhance educational opportunities for Aboriginal students. Financial support is provided for post-secondary education and training opportunities in the sciences, business, and the arts. Today, the Program sponsors a vast array of students, offering support through the Fine Arts Scholarship; the Business, Sciences and General Education Program; the Cultural Projects Program; and the Aboriginal Health Careers Bursaries and Scholarships.
- ***Blueprint for the Future (BFF).*** This initiative is a series of career fairs aimed to inform First Nations, Métis, and Inuit high school students of the wide selection

[2] National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation. (2009). Retrieved on January 12, 2009, from http://www.naaf.ca/html/awards_e.html.

of career opportunities available to them. The initiative aims to increase opportunities for Aboriginal employment. The one-day events consist of speakers, a multitude of workshops, and a trade show. Each year, two career fairs are offered in different cities across Canada. Since NAAF held its first career fair in 1996, over 30,000 Aboriginal students have attended.

- ***Taking Pulse (TP).*** The fourth and most recent initiative of NAAF works to connect Aboriginal youth to careers in various industries. The main goal of the initiative is to "increase Aboriginal participation in the Canadian workforce while simultaneously addressing the 70% high school dropout rate of Aboriginal students."[3] Taking Pulse (TP) has two components: *Industry in the Classroom* and *Rivers to Success*. Industry in the Classroom is a series of curriculum modules designed to increase awareness among Aboriginal youth about the various career opportunities available to them. Rivers to Success, a program still in its pilot stage, targets at-risk Aboriginal youth who have left school.

Each of these four activities contributes to NAAF's over-arching strategic outlook. NAAF's strategic outlook is expressed most plainly in its vision and mission statements.

**Vision Statement**: *Enriching Canada by Advancing Aboriginal Achievement*

**Mission Statement**: *Working in partnership with Aboriginal, private, and public sector stakeholders to promote, support and celebrate the achievement of Canada's Aboriginal Peoples.*

## 2.2 Program logic

The publicly stated objectives of NAAF government-funded programming are:

- To seek out and develop talented Aboriginal people, who would otherwise not have the opportunity to cultivate their talents and skills, by directing their course of study and by affording them the necessary training and materials for this study
- To encourage young Aboriginal people to discover their talents by creating awareness of and incentives in the visual and performing arts, business, and the sciences
- To develop artistic, business, and scientific talents through an organized comprehensive process of study
- To provide Aboriginal youth with opportunities to demonstrate, perform, and exhibit their work.

NAAF funding from each of the departments contributes to the achievement of these objectives and also contributes to the outcomes stated in the Results-Based Management and Accountability Frameworks (RMAF) of each of the departmental programs.

[3] National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation. (2009). Retrieved on January 13, 2009, from http://www.naaf.ca/html/pulse_e.html.

In order to fulfill the requirements of this funding cycle's evaluation, the interdepartmental evaluation working group built a specific logic model to describe the expected outputs and outcomes of the funding provided to NAAF by all three departments. Outputs and immediate, intermediate, and long-term outcomes are illustrated below by NAAF activity area.

**Logic Model for the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation (NAAF)**
**Canadian Heritage, Health Canada and Indian and Northern Affairs**

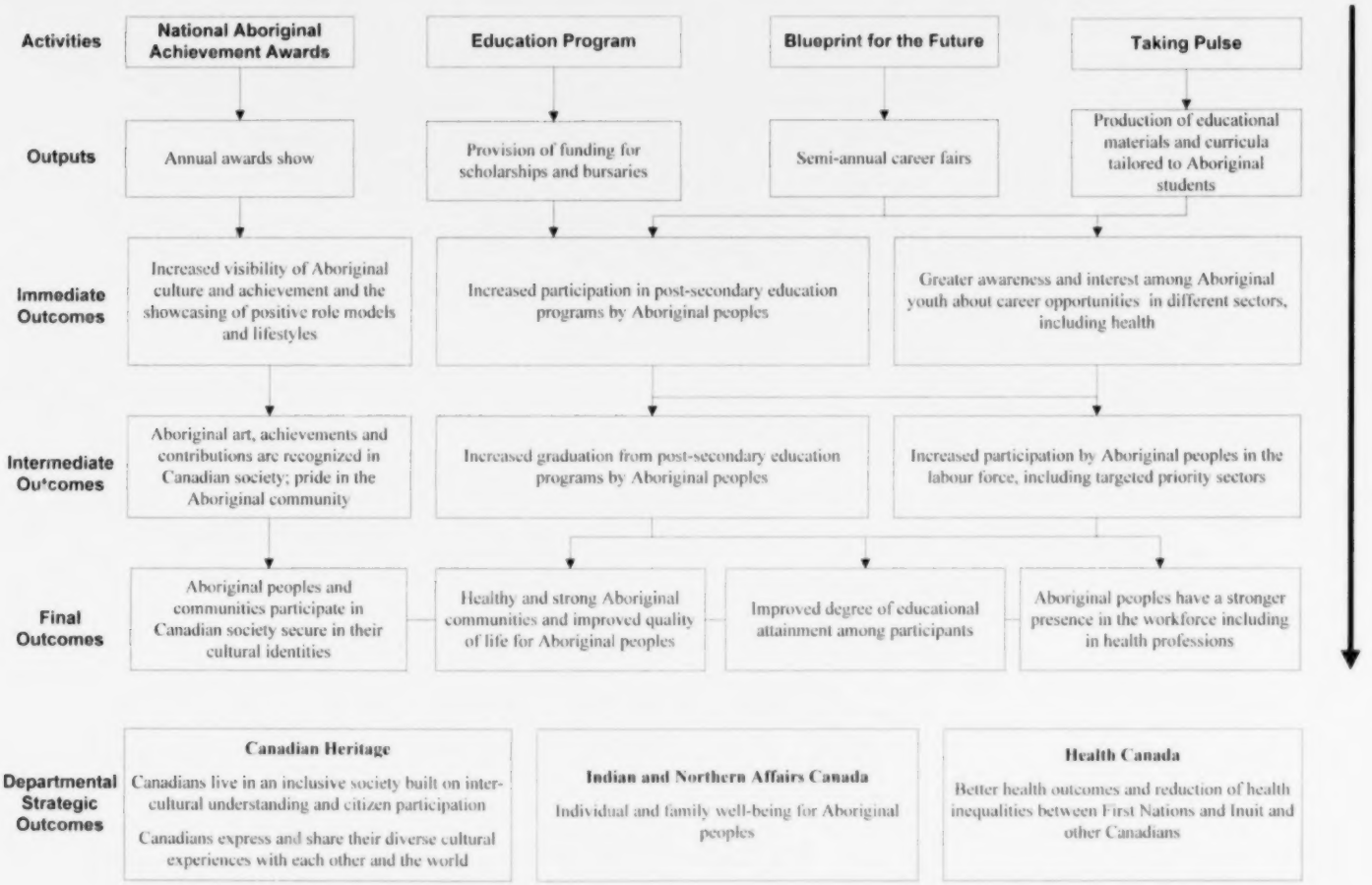
Activities
National Aboriginal Achievement Awards
Education Program
Blueprint for the Future
Taking Pulse
Outputs
Annual awards show
Provision of funding for scholarships and bursaries
Semi-annual career fairs
Production of educational materials and curricula tailored to Aboriginal students
Immediate Outcomes
Increased visibility of Aboriginal culture and achievement and the showcasing of positive role models and lifestyles
Increased participation in post-secondary education programs by Aboriginal peoples
Greater awareness and interest among Aboriginal youth about career opportunities in different sectors, including health
Intermediate Outcomes
Aboriginal art, achievements and contributions are recognized in Canadian society; pride in the Aboriginal community
Increased graduation from post-secondary education programs by Aboriginal peoples
Increased participation by Aboriginal peoples in the labour force, including targeted priority sectors
Final Outcomes
Aboriginal peoples and communities participate in Canadian society secure in their cultural identities
Healthy and strong Aboriginal communities and improved quality of life for Aboriginal peoples
Improved degree of educational attainment among participants
Aboriginal peoples have a stronger presence in the workforce including in health professions
Departmental Strategic Outcomes
Canadian Heritage
Canadians live in an inclusive society built on inter-cultural understanding and citizen participation
Canadians express and share their diverse cultural experiences with each other and the world
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
Individual and family well-being for Aboriginal peoples
Health Canada
Better health outcomes and reduction of health inequalities between First Nations and Inuit and other Canadians

**Figure 1**

## 2.3 Organizational structure

As the NAAF represents a cross-departmental initiative, its activities align with multiple strategic outcomes.

**Table 1: NAAF alignment within departmental strategic outcomes and program activity architecture**

| | Health Canada | Indian and Northern Affairs Canada | | Canadian Heritage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Strategic Outcome** | *Better health outcomes and reduction of health inequalities between First Nations and Inuit and other Canadians* | *People – Individual and family well-being for First Nations and Inuit* | *Economy – Economic well-being and prosperity of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people* *Education* | *Canadians have a sense of their Canadian identity* |
| **Program Activity** | **First Nations and Inuit Health Programming** | **Education** | **Community Investment** | **Engagement and Inclusion** |
| **Program Sub-Activity** | Community Programs FN/I | Elementary and Secondary Education | Community Economic Strategies | Aboriginal Peoples' Program |
| | Governance and Infrastructure Support to FN/I Health System | Special Education | | |
| | | Post-Secondary Education | Community Economic Institutional Capacity | |
| | | Cultural Education Centres | | |

As discussed in Section 2.2, the organization of funding from the Government of Canada is the product of several parties' individual funding agreements with NAAF. Figure 2 below provides a visual representation of these funding arrangements.

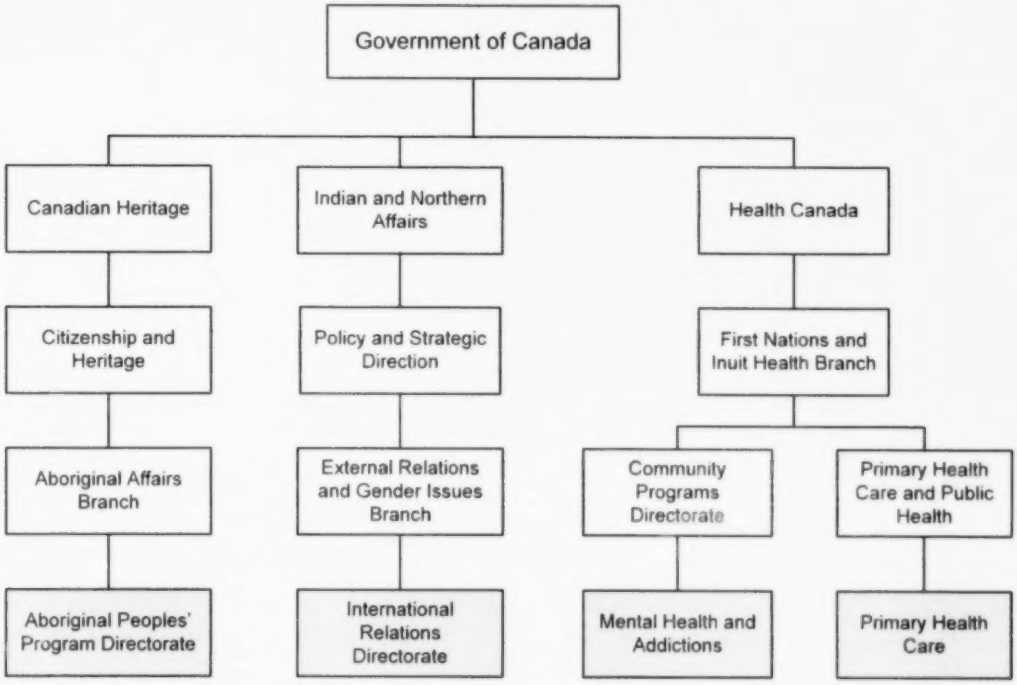


**Figure 2**

At Canadian Heritage, NAAF receives funding through the Aboriginal Peoples' Directorate. At Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, NAAF funding falls under the Contributions to the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation program authority, which lies within the International Relations Directorate. At Health Canada, NAAF is funded under two separate program areas, both within the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch: the Primary Health Care division and the Mental Health/Addictions division.

## 2.4 Resources

This evaluation has reviewed the multiple funding arrangements held between the Government of Canada and NAAF since the 2004-2005 fiscal year. It has also reviewed NAAF's audited financial statements over the same period. The following table presents a summarized overview of NAAF's financial position over the past government funding cycle.

| Table 2: NAAF financial position 2004–2008 ($) | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
| **Assets** (Cash, Accounts Receivable, Prepaid Expenses, Investments) | 20,237,864 | 20,113,816 | 18,585,618 | 29,400,929 | 28,421,063 |
| **Liabilities** (Bank Indebtedness, Accounts Payable, Accrued Liabilities, Revenue Received in Advance) | 2,634,678 | 2,294,728 | 1,243,476 | 1,989,507 | 968,713 |
| **Fund Balances** (Operating Fund, Externally Restricted, Restricted For Endowment) | 17,603,186 | 17,819,088 | 17,342,142 | 27,411,422 | 27,452,350 |
| Source: NAAF's audited financial statements 2004–2008 | | | | | |

Over fiscal years 1998-99 to 2003-04, Treasury Board (TB) provided authority for Canadian Heritage, Indian and Northern Affairs, and Health Canada to provide consolidated core funding to NAAF in the form of a grant. However, the renewed TB funding cycle 2005-10 reorganized federal funding to take the form of contributions rather than grants.

Currently, NAAF receives funding from the Government of Canada through two distinct channels. First, several contribution agreements have been signed between the relevant federal departments and NAAF. Second, through trust funds provided by various government departments. In terms of contribution agreements, Table 3 outlines financial assistance provided by the federal government over the evaluation period.

The following table reports the contribution agreements by the three departments, as well as NAAF's total revenues for the same period.

| Table 3: NAAF revenues 2004-2009 ($) | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Fiscal Year** | **Contribution Agreements** | **NAAF Total Revenues** |
| 2004/05 | 1,441,000 | 8,751,108 |
| 2005/06 | 1,157,000 | 7,853,305 |
| 2006/07 | 1,802,000 | 8,639,555 |
| 2007/08 | 1,879,000 | 7,404,709 |
| 2008/09 | 1,044,000 | 5,107,310 |
| **Total** | **7,323,000** | **37,755,987** |
| Source: NAAF's audited financial statements 2004-2008 | | |

Combined, the three departments – Canadian Heritage, Indian and Northern Affairs, and Health Canada – contribute $1 to $1.9 million dollars per annum to NAAF in support of program operations. These funds assist NAAF by providing a significant and stable source of revenue, as seen in Figure 3 below.

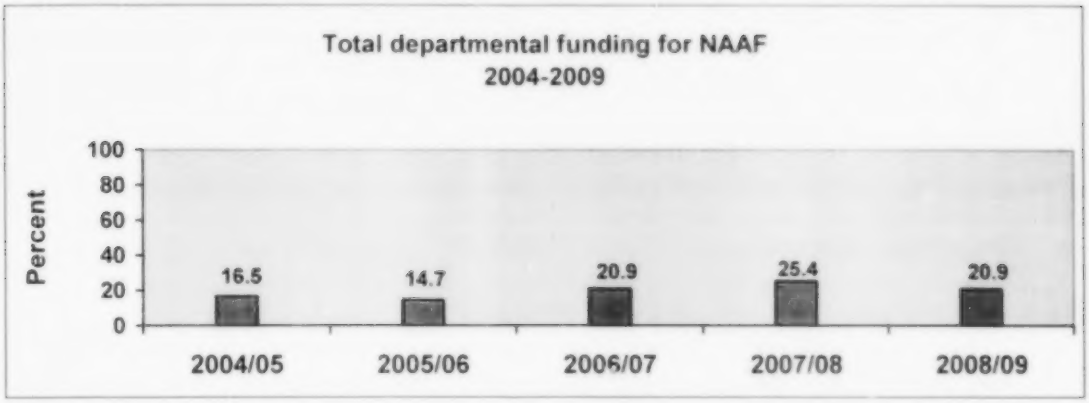


Figure 3

On average, the three departments accounted for 19% of NAAF's revenue during the five-year evaluation period. Levels have increased over the last three years, peaking at 25.4% in 2007-08. The balance of NAAF revenue comes from private industry, provincial/territorial and municipal governments, not-for-profit organizations, and private individuals.

Some of the contribution agreements target a specific activity area. The majority of funds, however, are allocated by NAAF internally, depending on program activities for the year and other sources of funding available.

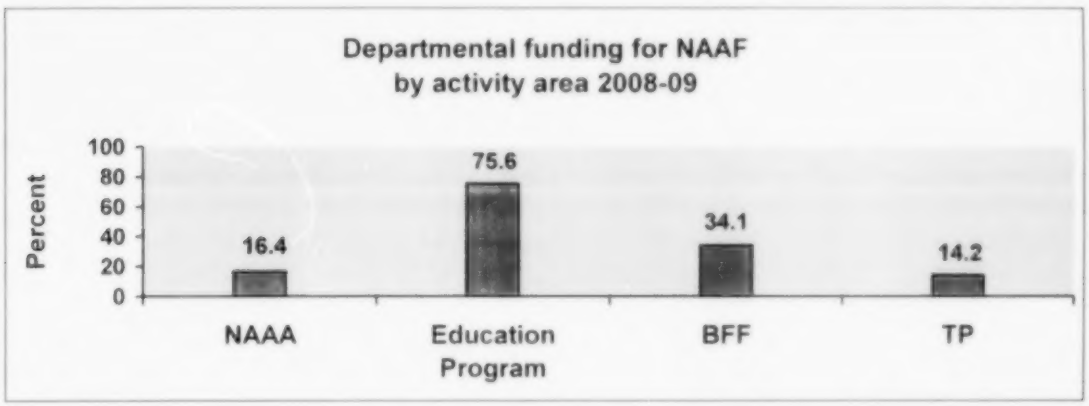


Figure 4

Overall, the three departments account for less than a fifth of NAAA funding, with the majority coming from the private sector and other levels of government. Federal funding plays a major role in programming for the Education Program. Until 2008-09, contribution agreements accounted for approximately two-thirds of this programming money, with the percentage increasing to three-quarters in 2008-09. About a third of BFF programming is covered by contribution agreements from the three departments.

This remained fairly constant during the five-year evaluation period. Conversely, support for the Taking Pulse program varies from one year to the next depending on the projects undertaken. For example, the departments accounted for three-quarters of the 2006-07 funding then fell to a third the following year.

NAAF is the benefactor of a Government of Canada Trust Fund – sometimes referred to as the Endowment Fund – that was paid by Canadian Heritage first in 2003, in a sum of $12 million, and again in 2007, in the sum of $10 million. This fund was created to establish an Aboriginal post-secondary scholarship program. NAAF also distributes scholarship funds held on behalf of Health Canada. Since 1998, these funds have been distributed under the Aboriginal Health Careers Bursary & Scholarship Awards. Funding provided by each department through contribution agreements is not always targeted to a specific NAAF activity; thus, NAAF distributes this funding internally.

# 3. Methodology

Several lines of evidence were employed to examine evaluation issues and questions. This section describes the methodological approach by task.

## 3.1 File and Document Review

Primary sources of information, provided by both the relevant funding departments and by NAAF itself, were reviewed. Documents from Canadian Heritage, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and Health Canada included internal briefing notes, funding agreements and financial documentation, interdepartmental agreements, relevant program area RMAFs, various reports received from NAAF, past evaluations, and program background documentation and literature.

Documentation reviewed from NAAF included annual reports, financial statements, position papers, program promotion materials, application forms for the Education Program, NAAA nomination forms, reports submitted to funders, internal evaluations, and internal policy documentation. Our evaluation also made use of NAAF's extensive internal data collection and monitoring system. From this system, we reviewed a significant amount of activity area data including: program usage, funding breakdowns, participant profiles, and other participant tracking studies.

Secondary, external sources of information were also reviewed as a part of this task, including: statistics from Statistics Canada, academic literature concerning the social position of Canadian Aboriginal Peoples, and various other relevant background studies and papers.

## 3.2 Environmental Scan

An environmental scan was conducted in order to form a detailed understanding of NAAF's operating environment, and thus, to address the issue of NAAF's continued rationale and relevance. The scan examined programs/services that are complementary or substitutable for those offered by NAAF.
The environmental scan was driven by two methods. First, key informants were asked about their knowledge of alternative programs/services. Key informants held a variety of backgrounds and their diverse areas of expert knowledge allowed for a wide breadth of investigation.

Second, a series of focused Internet searches using a variety of Internet search tools, primarily the Google search engine, were performed. These searches covered a range of predefined search terms. In addition, federal, provincial, and municipal government websites, various organizations' websites, and post-secondary institutions' websites were scanned for alternative programs. Many programs/services identified during the course of the scan were found via links from one relevant source to another.

## 3.3 Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews were another means of obtaining meaningful information on the significance and performance of NAAF and the value of federal government funding provided to the organization. The intentional selection of certain key informant groups allowed for insight from a variety of perspectives.

In March through June of 2009, a total of 40 interviews were conducted by telephone in both official languages. All key informants received an interview guide prior to the interview. The distribution of interviews among stakeholders was as follows:

- Key representatives of Canadian Heritage (n = 3)
- Key representatives of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (n = 3)
- Key representatives of Health Canada (n = 5)
- NAAF senior management (n = 3)
- Stakeholders involved in the facilitation of BFF and TP (n = 9)
- Past NAAA recipients (n = 7)
- NAAF private sector sponsors/funders (n = 5)
- Senior officials from other national Aboriginal organizations (NAFC, MNC, ITK, Nunavut Tunngavik, Nunatsiavut Government) (n = 5)

## 3.4 Survey

An online (web-based) survey was conducted as part of this evaluation targeting Education Program participants. The online format allowed us to reach a broad group of respondents who are generally considered a highly mobile subpopulation.

The survey was introduced to potential respondents directly by NAAF management through an introduction email. Those students who did not choose to opt-out of the survey research were then sent a formal invitation and web link from both PRA and Canadian Heritage. Respondents were sent up to two reminder emails during the three-week period the survey was open. Although the survey was compromised of mainly closed-ended responses, open-ended responses were coded and all data was transferred to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program for analysis.

The survey received a solid response rate of 27.1%, with precisely 502 completes out of 1,851 invitations. Our survey, assuming fully random sampling, is representative of a total population of approximately 8,400 students, with a confidence interval of 4.24 at a 95% confidence level.

## 3.5 Focus Groups

Two focus groups were held in Winnipeg, Manitoba on March 5, the day prior to the 2009 NAAA. Both sessions targeted Education Program participants and were designed to allow the evaluation to delve deeper into the issues surrounding the Education Program

portion of NAAF's operations. The focus groups were facilitated by PRA. In order to avoid response bias, external observers were not included in the focus group sessions. The focus groups were held in 1.5-hour sessions and each group consisted of three student participants. Participants received an incentive payment for their involvement.

## 3.6 Evaluation Management Process

An interdepartmental evaluation working group was made up of representatives of Canadian Heritage, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and Health Canada. Canadian Heritage acted as the lead department for the evaluation. The committee provided oversight throughout the course of the evaluation and provided feedback on issues of methodology design and reporting style at relevant stages. PRA performed each of the evaluation tasks.

## 3.7 Constraints and Limitations

Several limitations to the methodology did arise in the course of this study. However, none significantly undermined the viability or accuracy of the evaluation findings.

- **Limitations to data received from NAAF.** Requests for data from the NAAF on-site database were not fully met in every case. Although information regarding the background (e.g., geographic, ancestry, language) of Education Program participants has been collected and stored, it was not possible for NAAF to query and compile a complete 2004–2009 data set on participant background within the evaluation timeframe. To mitigate this outcome, a single period (2008–09) was used to perform a pretest and post-test analysis of change in the activity area (see Section 4.2).

- **Depth of the Environmental Scan.** The environmental scan identified and reviewed similar programs and services to those of NAAF across Canada. Although, the results of the scan were aptly comprehensive, the resources and timeframe allocated to this research did not allow for in-depth investigation at the community and micro-level. To mitigate this constraint, programs that existed at the micro-level were summarized and grouped into key categories and described in aggregate.

- **Lower than expected Focus Group participation.** Researchers had planned to facilitate two focus group sessions with up to eight participants in each session. Logistical difficulties surrounding the NAAA reduced the number of participants to three per session. Nevertheless, the reduced turnout allowed for detailed discussion surrounding the targeted evaluation issues and questions. Possibly, allowing for findings that might not have been elicited in larger groups.

- **Attribution.** In general, the intermediate and long-term outcomes associated with NAAF activity areas are influenced by many non-controlled variables. Accordingly, attribution becomes very difficult to measure and define. This

limitation is especially notable for outcomes associated with the NAAA. From the outset of this evaluation this constraint was understood. As a result, each methodological task was designed to best overcome the issue and in most cases analysis has been confined to program participants to limit the effects of external variables. In the case of the NAAA where an analysis of program participants was not sufficient to measure expected outcomes, viewership data (BBM[4]) was used. However, BBM data does have significant limitations, especially for the subject of this evaluation, as data is not collected on-reserve.

[4] BBM (Bureau of Broadcasting Management) collects television viewing data through meters placed in homes in large urban centres. Thus, no viewing data is available for northern and smaller communities such as First Nations reserves. BBM viewership data is but a proxy to measure trends and should not be considered a measure of total audience viewing.

# 4. Key Findings

This section of the report presents evaluation findings as they relate to each NAAF activity area. It combines evidence from all lines of investigation described in Section 3.

## 4.1 The National Aboriginal Achievement Awards

***Rationale and Relevance***

The NAAA represent the premier award of distinction within the Aboriginal community. As the federal government seeks to promote a positive image of Canadian Aboriginal Peoples, the NAAA have been and, as evidence gathered in this evaluation shows, should continue to be the optimal platform for this purpose. In other words, evidence elaborated throughout this section supports a logical link between funding the activities, outputs, and outcomes of the NAAA with the strategic outcomes of each department (see Table 1).

Foremost, an in-depth review of NAAA background documentation indicates a strong and lasting match between departmental priorities and those espoused of the NAAA. As the fitness of the NAAA to each department's strategic objectives appears strong in official documentation, the logical course of action is to then test whether the NAAA achieves the outputs and outcomes it promotes. Findings from this process are presented in Section 4.3. The remainder of this section addresses the aforementioned link between the activities of the NAAA and the priorities of the federal government.

That it is the role and responsibility of the federal government to support the NAAA has been unanimously asserted by senior managers within each of the three funding departments. Government officials agreed strongly that the NAAA fell under the public authority and duty of their respective department. Concurrently, key informants representing Aboriginal organizations and the community at large argued that the federal government has made regular commitments under several consecutive Speech from the Throne addresses that relate to the improved position and perception of Aboriginal Canadians.

The NAAA is well-supported by several private sector sponsors. Indeed, of all of NAAF's activities, the NAAA materializes the most attention from major private sponsors. Key informants from non-government funders indicated that the excellent reputation of the NAAA and the opportunities for private gain (networking, television advertising, client appreciation) were the most important reasons for supporting it.

Nevertheless, the private sector support of the NAAA does not necessarily preclude public sector support, as NAAF's leverage of private funding is not selective. In other words, NAAF continues to pursue additional and return sponsors of the event each year. Without government support, NAAF management has asserted that the NAAA would not be able to maintain its current status, and therefore, its intended impacts and outcomes.

Evidence gathered through a comprehensive environmental scan shows that the NAAA is, beyond doubt, the most recognized and respected distinction of achievement across the Canadian Aboriginal population. There are many other Aboriginal awards in Canada, however, these awards vary by region, purpose, category, ancestry, and other qualifying criteria. Key informants who had received an award at the NAAA consistently reported receiving special appreciation and honour for this award over other distinctions they have attained throughout their lives. Key informants representing both government and private sector sponsors unanimously cited the exceptional profile of the NAAA as important to the fact that the event is able to match their own objectives and, therefore, funding intent. Some of these stakeholders argued that the profile and reach of the NAAA was the most important factor in their decision to fund.

***Design and Delivery***

The extent to which the NAAA is able to reach across the Aboriginal population is excellent. Likewise, the NAAA has established a good profile in the non-Aboriginal population. The following table helps to illustrate this success by showing the distribution of awards over the past five years.

**Table 4: NAAA past recipients by ancestry 2004 – 2009**

| Ancestry | Total | % of recipients | % of actual Aboriginal population |
|---|---|---|---|
| First Nations | 64 | 76% | 72% |
| Métis | 15 | 18% | 22% |
| Inuit | 5 | 6% | 4% |

Note: Percentages exclude those who identify themselves as descendents of Aboriginal multiple ancestries.

**NAAA Past recipients by province/territory 2004 – 2009**

| Province | Total | % of recipient distribution | % of actual Aboriginal distribution |
|---|---|---|---|
| Newfoundland & Labrador | 1 | 1% | 2% |
| Prince Edward Island | 1 | 1% | 0.2% |
| New Brunswick | 1 | 1% | 2% |
| Nova Scotia | 5 | 6% | 3% |
| Québec | 7 | 8% | 16% |
| Ontario | 15 | 18% | 24% |
| Manitoba | 9 | 11% | 11% |
| Saskatchewan | 10 | 12% | 9% |
| Alberta | 15 | 18% | 15% |
| British Columbia | 7 | 8% | 15% |
| Yukon | 3 | 4% | 1% |
| Northwest Territories | 9 | 11% | 1% |
| Nunavut | 1 | 1% | 1% |

Note: Figures may not sum to 100% in the actual distribution column due to rounding.
Source: 2006 *Population Census*[5]

[5] Statistics Canada, *2006 Census of population*. Retrieved on June 13, 2009, from: http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/data/topics/RetrieveProductTable.cfm?TPL=RETR&ALEVEL=3&APATH=3&CATNO=&DETAIL=0&DIM=&DS=99&FL=0&FREE=0&GAL=0&GC=99&GK=NA&GRP=1&IPS=&METH=0&ORDER=1&PID=89146&PTYPE=88971,97154&RL=0&S=1&ShowAll=No&StartRow=1&SUB=732&Temporal=2006&Theme=73&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF=#DQF.

This analysis of the five-year period shows an exceptional fit between awards distributed by ancestry and geography. The only deficiencies are apparent in Québec and British Columbia. However, one should not conclude this to be a significant design and delivery concern, as many factors beyond the control of NAAF could influence the distribution of awards from year to year. For example, it is plausible that over the past five years these provinces have simply not produced the best degree of achievement (or achievers) within the Aboriginal community. Moreover, a review of the NAAA jury process indicates that awards are given on a balance of merit and subpopulation targeting – in this light, distribution remains impressive.

Within the five-year period of this evaluation, the location of the NAAA has traversed the country but remains in large urban centres in order to attract sufficient attendance and facilitate the logistical needs of this gala event.

- 2009 – Winnipeg
- 2008 – Toronto
- 2007 – Edmonton
- 2006 – Vancouver
- 2005 – Saskatoon
- 2004 – Calgary

The NAAA is subject to national broadcast on both the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network and the Global Television Network. An examination of television viewership data over the past five years shows rates have remained relatively consistent, drawing approximately 1–2% of viewers on the night it is aired (100,200 to 179,100 total viewers). This rate has been consistent through different broadcasters and broadcasting schedules. Further analysis of audience profiles shows that the majority of viewers tend to be older (65+) and retired, or are professionals. The audience also seems to be slightly more likely to be female (60%) versus male (40%). One point worth noting is that viewership data is not collected on-reserve, this likely leads to an underestimate of the total audience figure.

In general, the actual on-site delivery of the NAAA is of good quality. Although stakeholders from several groups have expressed dissatisfaction with the consistency from year to year, they did not assert that downturns in delivery quality had ever significantly affected the purpose or success of the event. NAAA supporting materials and documentation are of excellent quality. An analysis of these materials indicates that the event is well promoted and documented each year.

***Success***

All lines of evidence indicated that the NAAA was having a positive impact on the perception and position of Canadian Aboriginal Peoples. The immediate and intermediate outcomes of the NAAA are reported to be well-achieved (see logic model, Section 2.2). Indeed, stakeholders from the Aboriginal community consistently reported on the importance of positive role models within their community and the sense of pride

this instilled, especially among youth. Then, too, stakeholders from the non-Aboriginal community reported an increased awareness and interest in Aboriginal culture following from their involvement with the NAAA.

The vast majority of stakeholders believed that the NAAA was contributing to a more proud and secure cultural identity for Aboriginal Peoples within the wider Canadian society, although this argument was admittedly difficult for most stakeholders to qualify or quantify. The main supporting arguments presented were the reputation of excellence, which the event does resonate in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. Another point that was often raised was the importance of the role the NAAA plays in offsetting the negative media and corresponding stereotypes that exist surrounding the Aboriginal population. Furthermore, the track record the NAAA has established in selecting and mainstreaming positive and outspoken ambassadors of the Aboriginal community is simply outstanding. The result is a platform for resilient voices and a positive image representing the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada.

***Cost-effectiveness***

The findings of this evaluation that address the cost-effectiveness of the NAAA are based on two lines of evidence: a review of files and documentation, and key informant interviews. Following this investigation, it is possible to make general comments about the issue; however, to fully and more accurately appraise the value of the event, a formal cost-benefit analysis would be necessary. The application of such an exercise was outside of the parameters of this research. This issue is further discussed in Section 5 of the report.

A review of financial documentation shows that expenditures over the last five years for the NAAA have averaged $3,139,659.20. The accounting figures surrounding the event are sound and, based on sponsorship income, the event has not placed a financial strain on NAAF.

Still, the perceived value-for-money of the NAAA is a lively debate amongst expert stakeholders. On one side, the event is a costly one time expense – money that might be better spent making tangible changes in the lives of a larger group of less privileged Aboriginal Peoples. On the other side, the event must be extravagant by design to provide the necessary profile and respect needed to reach the maximum number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians with a lasting vision of Aboriginal achievement. Generally speaking, stakeholders representing funding organizations tended to argue the latter, while individuals representing the Aboriginal population – especially the North – argued the former. None suggested the NAAA should be cancelled or funding not be continued by the federal government. In essence, the NAAA are considered valuable within the Aboriginal community; it is simply the value-for-money that arose as an objective of debate.

## 4.2 The Education Program

***Rationale and Relevance***

Post-secondary education (PSE) funding is a primary focus of NAAF's vision. NAAF has a specific target to assist youth, and the principal mechanism the organization uses to approach this goal is the Education Program. This approach has remained constant, but has grown in scale markedly since the creation of the organization in 1985. In total, NAAF has disbursed over $32 million to over 8,400 recipients. Today, NAAF's Education Program is the single largest non-governmental provider of financial assistance to Aboriginal post-secondary students in Canada.

The Education Program is well-matched to the priorities of each funding department and the federal government as a whole. Furthermore, evidence gathered in this evaluation supports the fact that funding NAAF's Education Program is a logical means of achieving government priorities (see Table 1).

Stakeholders from each department stressed the importance of having an external organization in such a central position to be able to distribute targeted PSE funding across the entire Aboriginal population. Moreover, federal officials argued that the service provided through the Education Program was essential to their ability to contribute to their own strategic outcomes and departmental priorities, as shown in Table 1.

Data collected through the survey of Education Program participants suggests strong support for the relevance of the activity area. For instance, of the students receiving funding from NAAF, the vast majority still express concern or strong concern with many aspects of their finances. Firstly, 86% were either concerned or strongly concerned about having sufficient funding to complete their post-secondary education. Secondly, 66% of respondents were strongly concerned about the amount of debt they will have by the time they complete their post-secondary education. Thirdly, 75% were concerned or strongly concerned about the amount of time it would take them to repay their student debt. Lastly, but perhaps most notably, 85% of students were strongly concerned or concerned about having enough money to cover essential day-to-day costs while they were engaged in PSE studies. These responses clearly demonstrate that students are apprehensive about their financial situation, even while receiving funding from NAAF.

The results of the environmental scan show that a wide range of options exist for Aboriginal students seeking financial assistance during PSE; nevertheless, no other program/organization exists that can claim a similar scale or scope. Focus group participants explained that they, and, to their knowledge, their peers, used the Education Program alongside other forms of PSE support; none suggested that the Education Program was not essential to their ability to complete their studies. This finding is consistent with the evidence collected through the survey, as many respondents did report using other sources of funding in tandem with NAAF. Indeed, survey findings show that almost 9 in 10 (88%) of NAAF-funded students received financial support from two or more additional sources. Nevertheless, the observation that Aboriginal PSE students are

using other financing tools does not imply that the Education Program is not a useful and/or necessary resource for them. In fact, it emphasizes the continued need for the Education Program.

Perhaps a more telling indicator of Education Program relevance is the consistent annual increase in the number of applicants since program inception. Such a trend seems to indicate that, in spite of alternative funding opportunities, the relevance of NAAF providing the service remains strong.

Furthermore, key informants representing each funding department argued that NAAF was the only organization with sufficient capacity to disperse funding across the whole of the Canadian Aboriginal population. The benefits of this ability are further discussed under the cost-effectiveness heading within this section.

***Design and delivery***

An improvement in the ability of NAAF to reach all Aboriginal Peoples, regardless of ancestry, language, or geographic location, was a recommendation of the 2003 evaluation. This recommendation held specific mention of the Education Program, suggesting the program could do better to improve its reach across the Aboriginal population.

Key informant interviews with NAAF senior management and senior managers within each of the funding departments commonly agreed that NAAF was responding to this recommendation. These stakeholders argued that, although it was difficult to improve service in hard-to-reach areas of the country, especially the North, improvements were noticeable and ongoing. On the other hand, the majority of stakeholders representing the North and/or Inuit argued that NAAF was not serving the needs of their communities.

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The survey conducted of Education Program recipients produced the following profile of respondents by gender, ancestry, and official language:

**Table 5: Profile of survey respondents**
*Q43. Are you...?*
*Q42. Which category best describes your Aboriginal ancestry (and current status)?*
*Q44. What official language do you use most often?*

| | (n=513) | (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | | |
| Male | 135 | 26% |
| Female | 369 | 71% |
| No response | 9 | 2% |
| **Ancestry** | | |
| Status First Nation | 225 | 44% |
| Métis | 211 | 41% |
| Non-Status First Nation | 54 | 11% |
| Inuit | 12 | 2% |
| Métis and non-Status First Nation | 1 | <1% |
| In process of receiving status | 1 | <1% |
| No response | 9 | 2% |
| **Official Language Most Used** | | |
| English | 487 | 95% |
| French | 16 | 3% |
| No response | 10 | 2% |

Note: Column may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

The results of the survey indicate that the Education Program has served many more females than males, has served First Nations and Métis to a much greater extent than Inuit, and has served English speakers much more often than French speakers. However, the data from the survey can only provide a static perspective, and may not be as accurate as actual NAAF tracking data.

To test how well NAAF's Education Program has improved based on the recommendations of the 2003 evaluation, we can review Education Program data from NAAF's database for the period of the last evaluation with current period data. Any change in either funding distribution by ancestry or geographic location will represent a successful response effort by NAAF, but more importantly, a better match of the program with the requirements of federal funders and NAAF's own vision and mission.

The figure below presents a comparison between the pre-evaluation period, the most recent year, and the actual ancestral distribution of the population according to the 2006 *Aboriginal Peoples Survey*.[6] Evidently, the Education Program has moved closer to matching the actual distribution of the population for both First Nations and Métis. In terms of Inuit, representation has remained approximately the same – slightly under-represented in terms of the actual population.

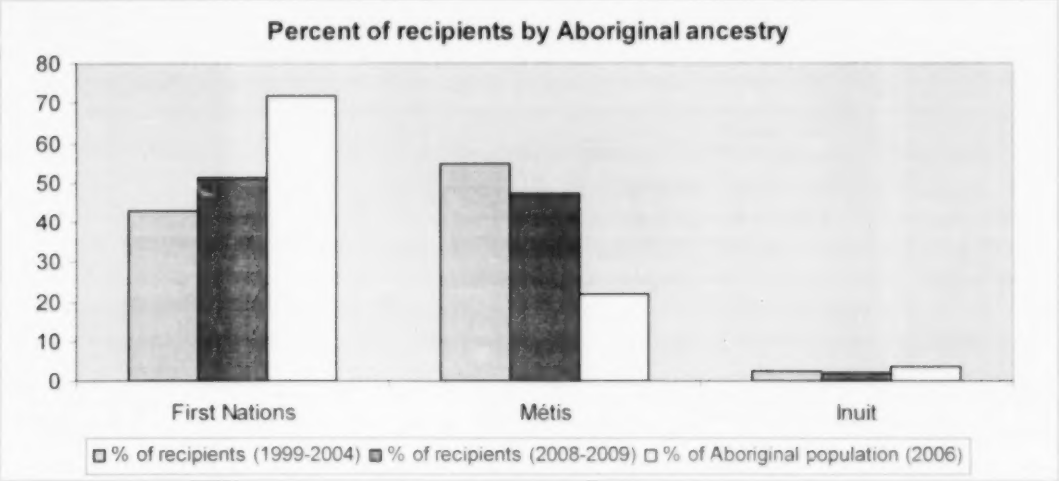
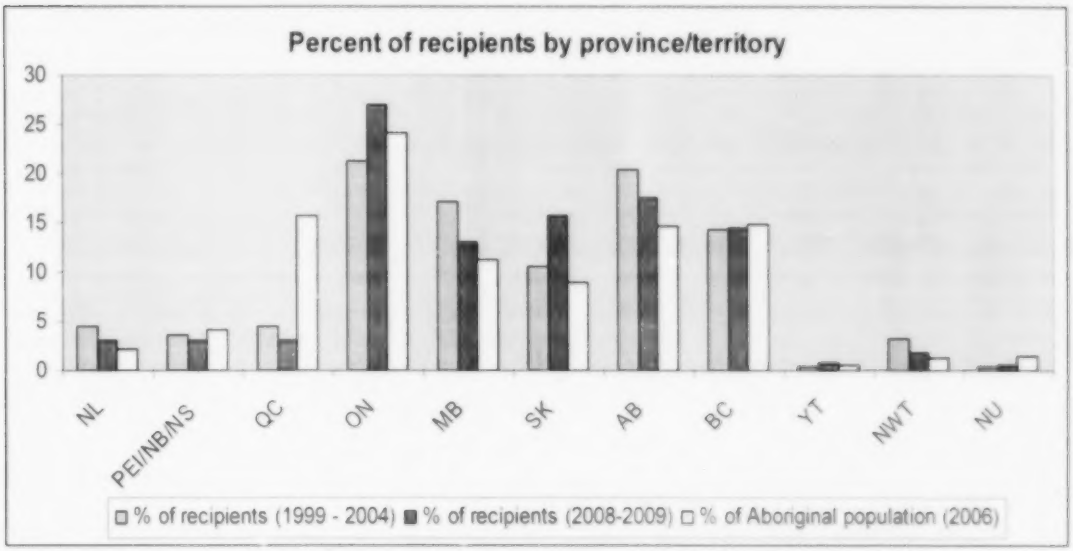



**Figure 5**

[6] Statistics Canada (2006), *Aboriginal Peoples Survey*. Retrieved on June 13, 2009, from: http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/data/topics/RetrieveProductTable.cfm?Temporal=2006&PID=89149&GID=614135&METH=1&APATH=3&PTYPE=88971%2C97154&THEME=73&AID=&FREE=0&FOCUS=&VID=0&GC=99&GK=NA&RL=0&TPL=RETR&SUB=733&d1=0&d2=0&d3=1.

The next figure examines distribution during the pre-evaluation period, the most recent year, and the 2006 *Aboriginal Peoples Survey* by province/territory. Again, the table indicates that in most cases, NAAF has moved to a closer representation of the actual distribution of the population. The most noticeable shortfall is for Quebec, where NAAF's representation decreased and falls well short of the actual population figures.




Note: Data for PEI, NB, and NS was only available for the pre-evaluation period in a single group. For comparison purposes it was then grouped for the 2008-09 period.

**Figure 6**

Although we were unable to analyze Education Program data from NAAF regarding recipients' first language, we did address this question in the recipient survey. Survey results indicate there is a slight barrier to NAAF services for non-English users. Results showed only 3.1% felt more comfortable using French over English. This figure is below the 6.5% of Aboriginal people who reported feeling most comfortable using French in the 2006 *Aboriginal Peoples Survey*. Not surprisingly, this finding is rather closely related to the Education Program's lack of service in Quebec.

A further point of interest regarding language is that 11% of the Aboriginal population felt most comfortable using an indigenous language, according to the 2006 *Aboriginal Peoples Survey*; however, only 0.8% of survey respondents reported studying in an indigenous language. Albeit, this finding is likely attributable to the limited number of PSE opportunities available in languages other than English or French rather than a deficiency in Education Program design and delivery.

In sum, an analysis of the Education Program's reach can be considered in two distinct ways: by number served per subgroup and by accessibility per subgroup.

In terms of program accessibility, evidence gathered in this evaluation indicates that the Education Program has made improvements since the time of the last evaluation. NAAF managers and members of the Aboriginal community, less the North and Inuit, have argued that NAAF has improved its accessibility to the whole of the Aboriginal population including language, ancestry, and geographic location. Investigation through in-depth interviews and document review indicates that the Education Program has made a significant effort to improve services to groups that were reported as underserved in the previous evaluation. Efforts have included a large scale-up in French language capacity, including full French service (documents and written communications) whenever requested. For the North/Inuit community, Inuktitut language support has been utilized and promotions of the Education Program have been made through other activity area events in the North such as Blueprint for the Future and Taking Pulse.

In terms of actual numbers served, the Education Program must improve service to two specific groups: the North/Inuit and Quebec/French speakers. Notwithstanding these two groups, the findings of this research show that the Education Program has made progress toward improving its actual service to the Canadian Aboriginal population. Key representatives from each federal department have reiterated this conclusion. However, Inuit and Northern stakeholders have argued, rightfully as our analysis shows, that they are underserved by the Education Program. Evidence also indicates that NAAF must do more to serve the French-speaking Aboriginal population, especially those residing in Quebec. These are key research findings of this study, and are discussed further in Section 5 of this report.

In terms of Education Program delivery mechanisms and methods, evaluation lines of evidence show that program delivery is consistently of excellent quality. Key informant interviews with government representatives uncovered a high degree of satisfaction with the delivery of the Education Program. Furthermore, the survey of program participants indicated a high degree of satisfaction with program delivery aspects including promotional materials, application and funding disbursement procedures, and ongoing communications/services rendered (these findings are discussed at length in the Survey Technical Report associated with this evaluation). Focus group sessions also discovered an overall sense of satisfaction amongst recipients with the delivery of the Education Program.

***Success***

During the initial planning stages of this evaluation, it was determined that the analysis of success for the Education Program would only examine program participants; for reasons of scale and difficulty in interpretation, it would not assess the Aboriginal population as a whole. The Education Program has had a deep and positive impact on program participants, and although such an analysis is not pursued here, there is good reason to believe it has impacted the wider Aboriginal community. The provision of funding for PSE has assisted many – some who might not otherwise have had the opportunity – in achieving their educational goals and in improving their longer-term life prospects.

The Education Program has been highly successful in achieving the outcomes laid out for the activity area within NAAF's program logic (see Section 2.2). Government and private sector funders have been very pleased with the efficiency and competence NAAF expresses in administering scholarships and bursaries. Government funders specifically assert strong satisfaction with how the Education Program is achieving or contributing to its immediate, intermediate, and final outcomes as per program logic. Representatives of other national Aboriginal organizations also reported on the success the Education Program has exhibited over its life span. In fact, several of these organizations choose to administer scholarships through NAAF rather than through their own organization, and attribute NAAF's track record of competency in the field as the reason for doing so.

Evidence gathered through the survey and focus group research has indicated that Education Program participants are also highly satisfied with what the program has helped them to achieve. The following sections assess the findings of survey and focus group evidence per logic model outcome.

***Increased participation in PSE programs***

It appears that the majority of students would still pursue a post-secondary education without NAAF funding. Over half of the students disagreed that if they had not received a NAAF scholarship or bursary, they would not have pursued a post-secondary education, while 23% of respondents strongly disagreed. However, 13% of students suggested that without Education Program assistance, they would not have made the decision to initiate PSE. Furthermore, over 10% of respondents said they did not know, indicating they were unsure about how the program had affected their decision. This data suggests that, although most beneficiaries of the Education Program intend to participate in PSE, regardless of NAAF support, at the very least, 13% of recipients contribute directly to this immediate outcome.

**Table 6: If I had not received a NAAF scholarship or bursary I would not have pursued post-secondary education.**

| | (n=513) | % |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly disagree | 118 | 23.0% |
| Disagree | 268 | 52.2% |
| Agree | 37 | 7.2% |
| Strongly agree | 29 | 5.7% |
| Don't know / not applicable | 53 | 10.3% |
| No response | 8 | 1.6% |

***Increased graduation from PSE programs***

Just over half of students believe that even without NAAF funding they would have been able to finish their current year of study. However, a significant number of respondents declared that without NAAF funding they would not have been able to complete their year of study. Indeed, 29.6% either strongly agreed or agreed that they would not have been able to complete their current year of studies without NAAF funding. Furthermore,

over 14% of respondents replied that they did not know, suggesting they were uncertain as to how the program has helped them to complete their current year of studies.

| Table 7: Agreement rating: If I had not received a NAAF scholarship or bursary I would not have been able to complete my current year of post-secondary studies. | | |
|---|---|---|
| | (n=513) | % |
| Strongly disagree | 56 | 10.9% |
| Disagree | 224 | 43.7% |
| Agree | 92 | 17.9% |
| Strongly agree | 60 | 11.7% |
| Don't know / not applicable | 73 | 14.2% |
| No response | 8 | 1.6% |

Considering the longer term, the majority of respondents declared that they would have been able to complete their post-secondary program without NAAF funding. However, over a quarter of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Again, 12% responded that they did not know, suggesting they were uncertain about the relationship between the Education Program and their ability to complete a PSE program. These findings indicate that the Education Program does contribute to its intermediate outcome of increased graduation of Aboriginal students from PSE.

| Table 8: Agreement rating: If I had not received a NAAF scholarship or bursary I would not have been able to complete my post-secondary program. | | |
|---|---|---|
| | (n=513) | % |
| Strongly disagree | 64 | 12.5% |
| Disagree | 237 | 46.2% |
| Agree | 82 | 16.0% |
| Strongly agree | 59 | 11.5% |
| Don't know / not applicable | 63 | 12.3% |
| No response | 8 | 1.6% |

Focus group sessions allowed for a more detailed investigation of both immediate and intermediate outcomes from the perspective of participants. In general, the findings regarding these issues were consistent with evidence gathered through the survey. For instance, most focus group participants argued that they had made the decision to pursue PSE before they had received or even applied for NAAF funding. They expressed that the Education Program had little effect on this decision, as they had made it much earlier in their lives and they had prepared financially and otherwise for this time. A few students, however, said they had decided to attend PSE, but that without NAAF funding it would never have occurred, as they were not financially capable on their own and with other sources of funding. In terms of being able to complete PSE without NAAF support, the argument of the majority of participants suggested the Education Program was essential. The sessions uncovered many reasons why NAAF support was so critical to their continuation in PSE. These ranged from meeting unexpected costs arising from their PSE program to meeting the day-to-day costs of providing for children or other immediate family members.

The easing of financial burden was also a strong finding of the survey, as nearly all students agreed that without NAAF funding, their debts would have increased significantly. The vast majority of students (90%) strongly agreed or agreed that if they had not received a NAAF scholarship or bursary they would have fallen deeper into debt. Education Program funding seemed to have an even deeper impact on students' financial situation. Evidently, 81% agreed or strongly agreed that if they had not received a NAAF scholarship or bursary they would not have had enough money to meet all their basic needs.

**Table 9: Agreement with impact of NAAF funding on finances**
*Agreement rating: If I had not received a NAAF scholarship or bursary I would have fallen deeper into debt.*
*Agreement rating: If I had not received a NAAF scholarship or bursary I would not have had enough money to meet all my basic needs.*

| | Without a NAAF scholarship or bursary... | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Would have fallen deeper into debt | | Would not have met basic needs | |
| | (n=513) | (%) | (n=513) | (%) |
| Strongly agree | 349 | 68% | 245 | 48% |
| Agree | 113 | 22% | 168 | 33% |
| Disagree | 17 | 3% | 50 | 10% |
| Strongly disagree | 10 | 2% | 14 | 3% |
| Don't know / not applicable | 16 | 3% | 28 | 6% |
| No response | 8 | 2% | 8 | 2% |

All focus group participants agreed that the funds provided through NAAF allowed them to more actively participate in the student community, and to feel more in place with their non-Aboriginal peers. This finding leads directly into the final outcomes of the program logic model. Discussion in the focus group sessions also uncovered that the ability to attain a higher education instilled a sense of confidence into students' lives outside of the classroom. Probing uncovered that PSE allows these students to feel more comfortable in non-Aboriginal Canadian settings and society, but also, students felt more inclined to understand, research, and partake in their own culture and Aboriginal heritage. This blend of old and new knowledge is a delicate balance which few social programs beyond self-determined higher education can achieve. Survey results echoed the final outcome-related findings explored in the focus groups and are discussed under the following headings.

***Improved degree of educational attainment among participants***

It appears that NAAF funding has had a significant impact on many students' post-secondary educational opportunities. Almost all students agree that their desired educational opportunities have increased because of the help provided by NAAF funding. Nine out of ten respondents either strongly agree or agree that, because they received a NAAF scholarship or bursary, they have or will have a better chance to get the education they desire.

| Table 10: Agreement rating: Because I have received a NAAF scholarship or bursary I have / will have a better chance to get the education I desire. | | |
|---|---|---|
| | (n=513) | % |
| Strongly disagree | 7 | 1.4% |
| Disagree | 17 | 3.3% |
| Agree | 162 | 31.6% |
| Strongly agree | 308 | 60.0% |
| Don't know / not applicable | 11 | 2.1% |
| No response | 8 | 1.6% |

### *Stronger presence in the workforce*

The majority of students believe that NAAF funding has increased their job and career opportunities. Eighty-one percent of respondents strongly agree or agree that because they have received a NAAF scholarship or bursary they have or will have a better opportunity to participate in the workforce.

| Table 11: Agreement rating: Because I have received a NAAF scholarship or bursary I have / will have a better opportunity to participate in the workforce. | | |
|---|---|---|
| | (n=513) | % |
| Strongly disagree | 6 | 1.2% |
| Disagree | 43 | 8.4% |
| Agree | 153 | 29.8% |
| Strongly agree | 263 | 51.3% |
| Don't know / not applicable | 40 | 7.8% |
| No response | 8 | 1.6% |

### *Healthy and strong communities; Improved quality of life*

Nearly all respondents said that their future quality of life would be better because of NAAF funding. Ninety-two percent of students strongly agreed or agreed that because they have received a NAAF scholarship or bursary their quality of life will be greater in the future.

| Table 12: Agreement rating: Because I have received a NAAF scholarship or bursary my quality of life will be greater in the future. | | |
|---|---|---|
| | (n=513) | % |
| Strongly disagree | 5 | 1.0% |
| Disagree | 11 | 2.1% |
| Agree | 165 | 32.2% |
| Strongly agree | 305 | 59.5% |
| Don't know / not applicable | 19 | 3.7% |
| No response | 8 | 1.6% |

***Participation in Canadian society with pride in Aboriginal culture***

The vast majority of students believe that they will have a more positive impact in society because they have received funding from NAAF. Over 90% strongly agree or agree that because they have received a NAAF scholarship or bursary they have or will have a better opportunity to participate positively in society.

| **Table 13: Agreement rating: Because I have received a NAAF scholarship or bursary I have / will have a better opportunity to participate positively in society.** | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **(n=513)** | **%** |
| Strongly disagree | 4 | 0.8% |
| Disagree | 15 | 2.9% |
| Agree | 180 | 35.1% |
| Strongly agree | 285 | 55.6% |
| Don't know / not applicable | 21 | 4.1% |
| No response | 8 | 1.6% |

The majority of respondents agree that they will have a better opportunity to enhance their cultural identity because they have received NAAF funding. The majority of students (84%) strongly agree or agree that because they have received a NAAF scholarship or bursary they have or will have a better opportunity to enhance their cultural identity.

| **Table 14: Agreement rating: Because I have received a NAAF scholarship or bursary I have / will have a better opportunity to enhance my own cultural identity.** | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **(n=513)** | **%** |
| Strongly disagree | 7 | 1.4% |
| Disagree | 36 | 7.0% |
| Agree | 167 | 32.6% |
| Strongly agree | 265 | 51.7% |
| Don't know / not applicable | 30 | 5.8% |
| No response | 8 | 1.6% |

The vast majority of students declared that they identify more strongly with their Aboriginal community since receiving financial aid from NAAF. The students who strongly agree that receiving a NAAF scholarship or bursary has allowed them to more strongly identify themselves with their Aboriginal community represented 52% of the total number of respondents, while those who agreed counted for 30%.

| **Table 15: Agreement rating: Because I have received a NAAF scholarship or bursary I identify more strongly with my Aboriginal community.** | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **(n=513)** | **%** |
| Strongly disagree | 9 | 1.8% |
| Disagree | 40 | 7.8% |
| Agree | 153 | 29.8% |
| Strongly agree | 268 | 52.2% |
| Don't know / not applicable | 35 | 6.8% |
| No response | 8 | 1.6% |

Overall, the majority of students who received a NAAF scholarship or bursary expressed that they were prouder of their heritage, had greater confidence in their future, and attributed their ability to participate in PSE to the financial support provided through the program – if not for directly paying for their PSE, then for assisting in making ends meet while they pursued their studies. In other words, survey results indicated rather clearly that the Education Program is achieving expected results for Aboriginal post-secondary students. As is discussed throughout the above section, each of these findings were reiterated and strengthened through personal details during focus group sessions.

***Cost-effectiveness***

The Education Program is a well-managed, financially sound operation and is well within NAAF's strategic vision. An analysis of Education Program documentation shows that the program has managed steady growth in numbers served, in scholarship areas, and in language and service capacity. Over the course of this expansion, the program has remained financially viable and has emerged as the leader in the field.

Reports from several key informant groups, especially government representatives, have argued that the Education Program provides a true value advantage in disbursing funds to PSE students. Representatives of each funding department have asserted that NAAF's established position in the field affords it a network of key stakeholders and a specialized skill base that allows the organization to administer and disburse funds in a highly cost-effective manner to Aboriginal PSE students in all areas of the country.

NAAF's well-established position within Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canada is also an advantage in terms of cost-savings. The first benefit of NAAF's strong image is the ability the organization has to attract sponsors and donors for the Education Program. Furthermore, as NAAF is such a well-known organization among Aboriginal Canadians and is therefore a common and accessible source for Aboriginal PSE students looking for funding opportunities, promotion and networking costs are much less than they would be for a lesser-known or start-up initiative/organization.
In sum, the competencies NAAF provides and the position NAAF has achieved allows the organization to disburse PSE funding to Aboriginal Canadians in a very cost-effective manner.

## 4.3 Blueprint for the Future

***Rationale and Relevance***

The emergence of BFF in 1996 was a purposeful manoeuvre by NAAF to bolster its services to Aboriginal youth. Over the past five years, BFF has evolved into a well-respected semi-annual series of career fairs that is now the largest Aboriginal-focused event of this type in Canada. Evidence gathered in the course of this evaluation supports the action of federal funding of BFF as a means of achieving departmental strategic outcomes (see Table 1).

Key informants from each funding department expressed that BFF held special relevance in their decision to fund NAAF. Furthermore, both Health Canada and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada have made specific contributions to NAAF for the sole purpose of fulfilling departmental priorities through the BFF activity area. The predominant reasons cited across departments were the focus the activity area takes on youth and the tangible link that BFF creates between Aboriginal young people and potential careers/employers. A further analysis of BFF background documentation and monitoring and tracking records indicate that the strategic purpose of the activity area is a strong match with the priorities and strategic outcomes of each department. Stakeholders also suggest that they see BFF as a strong strategic fit with the Education Program within NAAF's internal program architecture.

The current position of Aboriginal Peoples in terms of employment and income is strong justification for the continued relevance of BFF funding. Data from the 2006 population census[7] shows that the median income of a working Aboriginal person is $18,982, nearly $10,000 less than the median income of working non-Aboriginal Canadians. Furthermore, the unemployment rate among Aboriginal Canadians in 2006 was at 14.8%, which was more than double the national unemployment rate of 6.6% that same year.[8] The federal government has openly addressed these issues in several public forums including the Speech from the Throne, and the Indian Residential Schools Resolution. The link BFF creates between Aboriginal youth and a variety of career paths directly counters this issue, but also works to improve opportunities for future generations.

Findings of the environmental scan indicate that BFF is not the sole provider of career fair events of this type. Several other government-funded initiatives provide very similar programming or programming with a very similar end purpose. Large-scale examples include the Aboriginal Health Human Resources Initiative (AHHRI) or the Aboriginal Human Resources Council (AHRC). On a smaller scale, career fairs and other similar events are offered at many PSE institutions and community organizations across the country; some are funded by the federal government and some are not. BFF does, however, exhibit several unique characteristics. For one, NAAF's strong reputation allows BFF events to draw a considerable number of attendees and high-quality presenters. Furthermore, NAAF's other activity areas, especially the Education Program, provides a complementary and logical route for assisting Aboriginal youth to fully benefit from the program.

***Design and delivery***

Every year, BFF visits two Canadian cities and hosts a two-day career fair and set of presentations. BFF has done an exceptional job of responding to the recommendations of the previous evaluation that it should improve service to underserved areas, especially the North. Across the country, more than 30,000 Aboriginal students have attended BFF events, and over the past five years, individual events have attracted up to 1,650 students. Over the past five years, BFF events have been held in:

[7] Statistics Canada, *2006 Census of population.*
[8] Ibid.

- 2008/09 – Iqaluit & Winnipeg
- 2007/08 – Montreal & Whitehorse
- 2006/07 – Yellowknife & Halifax
- 2005/06 – Winnipeg & Vancouver
- 2004/05 – Ottawa & Saskatoon

The diverse locations BFF has been held in – including each territory, Quebec, and both East and West Coasts – are a strong representation of NAAF's commitment to improving its service to all Aboriginal Canadians. It is also representative of NAAF's ability to respond to the recommendations of the previous evaluation.

BFF program promotional and background information is of a high quality. A review of BFF documentation and reporting showed the activity area provides consistent, high-quality information to appropriate stakeholders. BFF has also initiated internal monitoring and evaluation of participant satisfaction at each event. This indicates a commitment to the long-term performance and improvement of BFF operations, as it allows NAAF to respond to participant needs.

BFF administrators and corporate participants indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the program; most stated they would participate in the event again when it would next be possible to do so. This response was common in both interviews and the review of data collected by NAAF on-site concerning participant and sponsor satisfaction. However, program administrators did voice a concern with the logistical difficulty in running the program in the North. Specific examples of difficulties included travel delays, length of travel time, the cost of supporting attendees from outside communities, and a greater challenge in attracting a broad range of business participants. Nevertheless, interviews with NAAF senior management revealed a sense of pride in their ability to have successfully facilitated a quality event in hard-to-reach regions, and a commitment to continue to serve the North through BFF.
Evidence gathered through interviews with government representatives showed a strong degree of satisfaction with issues of design and delivery with BFF, especially the recent commitment made to the North and the other areas identified in the 2003 evaluation as underserved – Quebec and the East Coast.

***Success***

BFF participants and administrators are generally satisfied with the performance of the program. However, northern stakeholders have argued that the success of the BFF could be improved in their communities if NAAF engaged in stronger partnerships with Inuit and/or northern organizations. Interviews with Northern/Inuit Aboriginal organizations uncovered a good sense of satisfaction with BFF events in the North, but also that these organizations would appreciate being more involved in BFF and NAAF's northern work. Several organizations suggested pre-planning through a direct partnership prior to a BFF event could increase the profile of the event in the Inuit community and potentially

decrease NAAF's logistical costs for the operation as NAAF's presence could be reduced.

NAAF monitoring and tracking studies have shown that participants report an increased knowledge of career opportunities and pathways. As mentioned, BFF activity area staff provide a brief satisfaction survey with both student and sponsor participants at the close of each event. BFF administrators and corporate sponsors also argued that they had strong reason to believe this immediate outcome was being successfully achieved (under the BFF portion of the NAAF logic model – *greater awareness of career opportunities among Aboriginal youth*). They cited heartfelt conversations with attendees who spoke openly and often of the inspiration the BFF had provided in their outlook on the future.

Indications of behavioural change among corporate participants at the BFF illustrate how BFF has led to Aboriginal participation and engagement in the workforce. Although, stakeholders from NAAF management, BFF, the wider Aboriginal community, and the federal government have suggested that BFF contributes to a greater Aboriginal representation in the labour market. More tangible evidence of achieving this intermediate outcome of BFF program logic was discovered through key informant interviews with corporate sponsors. Sponsors reported that their firm came away from the BFF event with a revamped internal commitment toward hiring Aboriginal employees and promoting their company through new channels to Aboriginal students and youth.

In discussing the program logic of BFF, there are two caveats that relate to the outcomes as they are stated in the logic model. First, there was no evidence collected in this evaluation that showed health careers received substantial priority or representation over other fields. Second, there was very little evidence that indicated BFF was well linked to further NAAF activity areas such as the Education Program, which would facilitate the fulfillment of intermediate and final outcomes of the BFF activity area, and thus, NAAF's overall strategic vision and purpose.

As an unintended consequence, administrators and volunteers at BFF events have reported an increased sense of pride in their culture and the future generations within the Aboriginal community. Some stakeholders reported being inspired by BFF to design smaller-scale career fairs to offer to their local community on a more regular basis.

***Cost-effectiveness***

The cost-effectiveness of BFF is largely dependent on the location of the event. For instance, providing BFF in Winnipeg or Vancouver can attract a broad range of corporate participants, attract large numbers of youth attendees, and reduce travel and other logistical costs. Conversely, providing BFF in the North can decrease attention from the desired spectrum of corporate participants, increase administration and logistical costs, and decrease the number of overall youth served.

The trade-off between higher cost and advancing BFF reach is, however, well-managed and mitigated by NAAF senior management. The current strategy has been to apply a mix

of both larger venue events and to continue to push the boundaries of program reach by providing the program in areas not typically served by this type of event. This approach is seen as a strategic advantage by government funding departments, as all interview respondents asserted that funding BFF allowed for quality programs in hard-to-reach areas.

A review of NAAF financial documentation and BFF background materials indicates that BFF is currently financially sound. Even through activity area expansion BFF has upheld a consistent track record of financial sustainability.

## 4.4 Taking Pulse

***Rationale and Relevance***

The TP activity area is NAAF's most recent initiative. Like Blueprint for the Future, TP purposefully targets Aboriginal youth in order to inspire and motivate about career opportunities. Since its inception in 2001, TP has evolved significantly from a conference of business leaders discussing Aboriginal employment issues into two tangible channels: Industry in the Classroom and Rivers to Success. Over the past five years, Industry in the Classroom – enrichment curriculum presented to Aboriginal high school students to promote awareness and interest in different careers – has been held at many schools and community centres across the country. Rivers to Success – multiple initiatives designed to facilitate the return to school of Aboriginal youth – remains in its early pilot stages.

TP initiatives represent a unique fit with the federal government's priorities regarding Aboriginal Peoples. TP addresses the issues of Aboriginal under-representation in the Canadian workforce and the significantly lower rate of educational attainment within the Aboriginal population. Findings from the cross-country environmental scan indicate that TP is the only collaborative effort between the Aboriginal community and multiple private sector partners designed to approach these issues. In this context, funding TP does contribute to the stated strategic objectives of each of the funding departments (see Table 1).

However, in comparison with other NAAF initiatives, TP has received much less financial support from the government, instead relying largely on private sector sponsors. In fact, Health Canada does not fund TP, and funding from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Canadian Heritage comes out of funding provided to NAAF for all four activity areas.

In many respects, the reliance of Industry in the Classroom on private sector sponsorships seems fit to the purpose of the initiative – connecting Aboriginal youth with career opportunities in the fields of the partner organizations. However, given the close link between the objectives of Industry in the Classroom and the federal government regarding Aboriginal Peoples, there is appropriate rationale for the federal government to be involved in funding the initiative and perhaps in forging a more collaborative

partnership similar to the approach used by private sector organizations. Furthermore, Industry in the Classroom demonstrates a strong focus on health careers, as over 50% of students served have been in a health-related module.

Similarly, the Rivers to Success initiative represents a robust link with the priorities of the federal government regarding Aboriginal Peoples. As this portion of the TP activity area is still in its beginning stages, the commitment of the federal government to this initiative might well provide the necessary support to push it into a stable existence.
Interviews with officials representing the federal government indicated that they had much less knowledge of TP than they did of the NAAF initiatives they are more actively involved with. Therefore, the majority of these stakeholders did not comment on the fitness of TP to the priorities of their department or the federal government as a whole.

***Design and Delivery***

TP has been highly successful in reaching a wide range of the Canadian Aboriginal population. As of June 2009, there have been at least 4,941 students served at a total of 163 Industry in the Classroom sessions. Although originally designed to be held in high schools, the series has expanded into many new venues including:

- Camps
- Career Fairs / Youth Conferences
- Friendship Centres
- Learning Centres
- Community Workshops
- Health Centres
- University Field Trips

Rivers to Success has run several pilot projects. Most recently, these have been comprised of youth roundtables in multiple locations across Canada, including the North.

TP programs have been held in every province and territory in Canada. Certainly, the TP activity area offers a unique characteristic in that once a session model is developed it is provided very easily from one location to another. In fact, the sessions are provided by NAAF free of charge to the host community.

Similar to BFF, however, Aboriginal organizations representing the North have expressed a desire to partner more closely with NAAF to administer TP programs in their communities. These stakeholders expressed satisfaction with TP operations in the North, but feel the events could be better organized and promoted to the community through working relationships with local organizations. Research findings were well linked on this topic as former and current administrators of the TP program suggested that the logistics of providing the program in remote communities were difficult and affected the opportunity for the program to flourish and maximize effectiveness in these areas.

A review of TP promotional materials indicates a consistent level of quality through program promotion, operations, and monitoring/tracking. Likewise, interviews with knowledgeable stakeholders revealed a high degree of satisfaction with both TP program information and reporting and monitoring. As mentioned, the sole criticism was that northern and Inuit organizations believed events could be better promoted and planned through formal working partnerships.

***Success***

The TP activity area provides a high-quality, well-positioned, and well-managed service to Canadian Aboriginal youth. Taking Pulse administrators and NAAF senior management are highly satisfied with the performance of the activity area to date. However, NAAF management contends that TP is perhaps the most difficult activity area to measure in terms of success. Still, they do contend that the feedback they receive from participants, administrators, and sponsors indicates a successful delivery of the program.

Evidence gathered in this evaluation illustrates how TP has achieved its immediate outcomes in terms of creating greater awareness and interest among Aboriginal youth about career opportunities, including in the health sector. This finding has arisen through all relevant lines of evidence. Particularly, private sector funders have expressed pleasure with the current performance of TP in creating interest and inspiration among Aboriginal young people. However, similarly to the position of NAAF management, this study has had difficulty in tracking how well TP is achieving and approaching intermediate and final outcomes.

Plainly, the Rivers to Success program, as it is currently in its preliminary conception and pilot phases, cannot, and should not, be evaluated against long-run objectives. Nevertheless, it is very difficult to tangibly link the Industry in the Classroom program to either increased participation in the labour force or increased participation in PSE by program participants. However, it becomes even more difficult to draw concrete links between the activity area and any of the final outcomes of NAAF program logic (see Section 2.2).

An improvement in the linkage of the activity area with the medium and long-term outcomes of the program area is a necessary condition of increased and sustained government funding to the TP activity area. This issue is discussed in more detail in Section 5 of this report.

***Cost-effectiveness***

The TP activity area is a highly cost-effective initiative. Through the Industry in the Classroom program, NAAF has been able to harness the private sector into providing a service that is in the interests of these businesses, but also a robust match with the needs of the Aboriginal population. Furthermore, the design of the Industry in the Classroom initiative is such that each module is used in more than one location, and therefore, production is offered at decreasing costs to scale.

A review of NAAF financial statements over the past five years indicated TP is a financially viable activity area.

# 5. Conclusions, Recommendations and Management Response

This final section of the report presents conclusions and recommendations based on the findings presented in the previous sections. The section covers each of NAAF's activity areas. It is structured along the four evaluation issues.

Three of the four recommendations below relate to issues of program design and delivery with the fourth recommendation focusing on program success. Three of the four recommendations (1, 2 and 4) call for direct action from NAAF while one recommendation (#3) requires direct action by the federal government. INAC will take the lead on responding to all four recommendations, including gathering responses from NAAF on three of the four recommendations. PCH and Health Canada involvement is required under the third recommendation. PCH will also offer support in response to the fourth recommendation.

## 5.1 Rational and Relevance

The overarching vision statement of NAAF is "Enriching Canada by Advancing Aboriginal Achievement." This is a robust match with Canadian Heritage, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and Health Canada priorities and within each department's program funding authority. Moreover, both the overarching vision and the specific activity areas of NAAF are well-matched to the current roles and responsibilities of the Government of Canada regarding Aboriginal Peoples. Aboriginal Peoples continue to be under-represented in PSE and the labour force. As an outcome of this disadvantaged social position, Aboriginal Peoples are forced to combat persistent negative stereotypes through most media and other social channels.

Canadian Heritage, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Health Canada, and the federal government as a whole have repeatedly expressed a desire to improve the position of Aboriginal Peoples within Canadian society. NAAF has been selected as a mechanism by which this task can be achieved. The findings of this evaluation indicate NAAF does well to approach and overturn several of the negative circumstances facing the Aboriginal population including under-representation in PSE, under-representation in the labour force, and promoting a positive image of Aboriginal Peoples and culture.

There is a wide range of similar programming to that of NAAF available to Aboriginal Peoples and communities across the country—some of these programs are also funded by the federal government. However, NAAF is by far the largest and most comprehensive service provider in the activity areas it administers. For instance, NAAF is the only

organization to offer four activity areas on a national scale to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples.

Beyond NAAF's size and scale advantages – advantages that set it apart from other means of approaching these issues – there is more pressing evidence that, despite alternative programming in existence, there is a continued need for attention to these issues. This evidence lies within the sustained social plight of Canadian Aboriginal Peoples. In essence, even with alternative programming available, expert stakeholders and documentation has indicated that demand far outweighs supply for NAAF's services. Then too, even with NAAF, Aboriginal Peoples still seek out and use alternative sources of assistance to finance their post-secondary education, identify culturally relevant role models, and receive career planning and advancement assistance.

In sum, the evidence revealed through this evaluation supports the continued funding of NAAF, as the rationale and relevance for funding the organization and initiatives of this purpose remain strong and necessary.

## 5.2 Design and Delivery

The issue of NAAF program reach represents the greatest challenge to the achievement of NAAF's objectives and the objectives of federal government funding. Although findings of the evaluation indicate that NAAF has made significant progress in accurately representing the population in terms of geographic distribution and Aboriginal ancestry, two definable gaps persist. First, is service within the province of Quebec and to French-speaking Aboriginal Peoples. Second, is service to the North and to the Inuit. These two service gaps were identified during the 2003 evaluation; thus, in terms of design and delivery issues, they do identify as an area of significant consideration for the federal government.

However, NAAF has made tangible improvements in bolstering its accessibility to these underserved subpopulations. For one, both BFF and TP activity areas have made planned and successful inroads into the North and Quebec. Moreover, NAAF has improved French capacity over the entire organization, making a commitment to provide all communications and program materials in French upon request. Finally, NAAA and Education Program selection juries have included population sub-targeting as a part of the selection process. In sum, although the number of French and northern stakeholders served has not improved substantially, NAAF has made noticeable changes to increase accessibility to these groups.

**Recommendation**

1. For federal government funding to be justified as serving the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada, NAAF must continue to make progress on distributing services equitably within the entire Aboriginal population. Improving accessibility for hard-to-reach groups, namely the North and French-speaking subpopulations, must lead to improving actual numbers served.

**Management Response**: Accepted

The Director of International Relations, INAC will take the lead on this recommendation and work with other government departments and NAAF to develop more targeted measures, such as outreach campaigns, specialized advertising, and stay-in-school and high-school equivalency initiatives for Inuit youth, who have lower high-school graduation rates and to produce additional materials in French for French-speaking youth.

**Implementation date:** April 1, 2010

In addition, the Director of International Relations, INAC will work with other government departments and NAAF to develop annual targets for take-up of NAAF programs as well as consistent and detailed tracking procedures. INAC will meet bimonthly with NAAF to ensure that targets are being met and progress is being tracked.

**Implementation date:** January 1, 2010

Through the course of this research, one engaging finding was repeatedly uncovered when investigating the issue of program reach. Stakeholders from Inuit groups have suggested a willingness for NAAF to forge stronger relationships with local organizations to administer services to the North. This suggestion is interesting, given that several stakeholder groups, including NAAF officials, have argued that the largest barriers to increased program provision in the North are financial cost and logistical complexities.

In this context, the presence of working partnerships – between northern organizations, which possess an expertise in the needs of the local community, and NAAF, who possesses an expertise in each activity area – represents many potential synergistic benefits, including in the areas of cost and logistics. Although it was not a finding of this study, the same concept might prove beneficial in attempts to improve services within the French-speaking Aboriginal population.

**Recommendation**

2. NAAF should explore the possibility and potential of partnering with relevant like-minded organizations. These partnerships should be based on the common goal of improving NAAF service to currently underserved groups.

**Management Response:** Accepted

The Director of International Relations, INAC will work with other government departments, INAC Sectors and Regions and NAAF to develop a strategy for establishing and maintaining working relationships with organizations such as, but not limited to, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) and other regional Inuit organizations as well as L'Assembléé des Premières nations du Québec et Labrador (APNQL) in order to improve ongoing "on the ground" outreach to currently underserved groups, including targets and performance measures.

**Implementation date:** January 1, 2010

Other issues of design and delivery have been effectively managed by NAAF. For one, among program participants, there has been a high degree of satisfaction with the structure and delivery mechanisms of NAAF programming. External experts and observers (public and private sector funders, other National Aboriginal Organizations) are highly satisfied with the activity areas NAAF operates, and how they are operated. NAAF program information and materials are comprehensive and are of excellent quality and consistency. NAAF activity areas are supported by high-quality background documentation. Evidence shows that all stakeholder groups have been highly satisfied with the quality and accessibility of NAAF program materials.

A review of multiple funding agreements and reporting documentation indicated that NAAF had a strong record of transparent communication with its funders. NAAF officials believe that current reporting requirements allow for a fair and transparent representation of the organization. Nevertheless, NAAF officials expressed a degree of frustration with the reporting requirements associated with the funding arrangements they hold with the federal government. The most significant problem they assert is the lack of coordination from one assessment to another. The requirements of this evaluation were considered a part of this concern. Furthermore, some federal government officials have expressed some concern with NAAF's ability to report directly on the requirements that are made of them. No department cited a high degree of difficulty in overcoming this issue through cooperation with NAAF if it had occurred.

**Recommendation**

3. The federal government should create a single set of reporting requirements for NAAF funding. This will allow the federal government to stipulate a comprehensive set of performance data for review and analysis. Accordingly, it will eliminate the multiple, often competing, reporting demands placed on NAAF and improve the efficiency of the resources NAAF devotes to this task.

**Management Response:** Accepted

This recommendation requires that INAC, PCH and Health Canada coordinate and streamline their reporting and evaluation requirements, while satisfying needs with regard to accountability, value for money and measuring impacts. The Director of International Relations, INAC will work with PCH and Health Canada to establish an interdepartmental working group to identify and assess current reporting demands, and to propose options which will reduce the reporting burden while not diluting reporting standards. This working group will report by January 30, 2010.

**Implementation date:** November 1, 2009

In addition to standardizing reporting requirements across the three departments (INAC, PCH and Health Canada), the Director of APP at PCH will explore opportunities to share data and the PCH reporting templates with other federal government funders, such as HRSDC, in hopes of easing NAAF's reporting requirements while maintaining federal government accountability obligations.

**Implementation date:** November 1, 2010

## 5.3 Success

At the outset of this evaluation study, it was decided that measurements of NAAF success would be made within the program participant group rather than the entire Aboriginal population. The exception was the NAAA.

In this light, evidence gathered in this evaluation indicates how NAAF activity areas have been proficient in achieving and approaching the majority of the outcomes laid out in the program's logic. The organization has increased the visibility and profile of Aboriginal Peoples and culture within Canadian society – a much needed outcome. Furthermore, among program participants, NAAF has significantly assisted Aboriginal Canadians, notably youth, in improving participation rates in PSE and, moreover, in terms of total educational attainment, two areas in which the Aboriginal population lags significantly behind the non-Aboriginal population. NAAF has also made significant progress on presenting Aboriginal young people with a broad range of career perspectives and the motivation and self-belief necessary to achieve these outcomes. Overall, NAAF has certainly had a significant positive impact on the Canadian Aboriginal population, especially those who have had direct contact with NAAF's programming.

In general, NAAF program participants hold a high degree of satisfaction with the programs they use. This is a significant finding, as not only does NAAF do well to achieve program outcomes, it does so in a manner that is accepted and celebrated within the Aboriginal community. With such strong support from the community, the organization has the potential for truly organic, participatory growth. A caveat to this point, however, should be noted. Specifically, the importance of improving service and perhaps working relationships with currently underserved groups.

Moreover, external observers and experts (government officials, senior officials at other Aboriginal organizations, non-government sponsors) are highly supportive of and satisfied with the achievements of NAAF work. Nevertheless, from the perspective of the federal government, there is a need that NAAF draw robust, tangible links between the services it provides and the outcomes it claims to pursue and achieve. The TP and BFF activity area are, in some cases, prone to insufficiency on this important funding criterion. For instance, it is very difficult to postulate a strong degree of positive association between participation in a BFF or TP event and increased rates of educational participation and attainment. In essence, the problem is not in providing a legitimate argument for correlation but in actually tracking what BFF and TP participants are doing prior to participation in these programs. The simplest solution to this issue would be

monitoring participant flow from one activity area to another. In this case, flow from BFF and TP to the Education Program. Furthermore, to improve the likelihood that this specific link occurs, NAAF should dynamically promote the opportunities available through the Education Program at BFF and TP events.

**Recommendation**

4. NAAF should scale-up the promotion of the Education Program to participants in TP and BFF. This will support the degree to which intermediate and final outcomes are achieved for both the TP and BFF activity areas. Moreover, in order to improve monitoring and measurement of program success, NAAF should track participant flow from one activity area to another.

**Management Response**: Accepted

The Director of International Relations, INAC will work with other government departments and NAAF through regular multi-party meetings to support NAAF in developing more effective monitoring systems that can better track participant activity prior to and following participation in TP or BFF activities by, for example, establishing participant profiles which can be entered into a database and tracking interactive website use.

**Implementation date:** April 1, 2010

The Director of APP at PCH will support this recommendation by contributing expertise in the development of NAAF's monitoring systems.

**Implementation date:** April 1, 2010

## 5.4 Cost-Effectiveness

The level of financial resources delivered to NAAF by the federal government has not changed significantly over the past five years. The minimal financial analysis performed in this evaluation indicates that the mix of private and public sector funding, and the mix of contribution payments and trust funds that NAAF receives from the federal government, is suited to the objectives of NAAF and is received with reasonable expectations of results. The level of funding currently provided is sufficient to maintain NAAF's program mix and scale of operations. It will likely not favour program expansion.

To a certain extent, the funding provided to NAAF by the federal government is a source of stability for operations. Government funding alone could not support NAAF's current operations; however, the funding provided by the government plays a critical role in attracting private sector donors. To these donors, a financial support-base from the federal government is an indicator of organizational sustainability and accountability.

One important lesson of this evaluation, which arose from the document and literature review, was that the federal government could do better to maintain accessible records of contribution payments made to NAAF. An improved record of financial documentation, or at least the improved accessibility of financial documentation, will definitely better senior managers' understanding of the cost-effectiveness of NAAF funding on an ongoing basis.

Another key lesson learned is that any future studies or evaluation work performed should be supported by the analysis of performance measurement data, which is collected on a regular basis and made available for analysis without complication. NAAF should make more accessible and up-to-date records of performance indicators available to all relevant stakeholders, including federal funders. By increasing the accessibility of such information, NAAF will not only allow for clearer communication with key funders, but will also facilitate the preparation of consequential, meaningful, and accurate promotional materials. Useful performance measurement data is already being collected by NAAF, and NAAF should take further steps to improve the accessibility and dissemination of this data.

The extent to which government funding has been allocated internally between activity areas is largely dependent on the objectives NAAF is expected to pursue. In this context, investigation indicates NAAF has been efficient in the allocation of funding to its four distinct activity areas. However, it also indicates that if the federal government wishes to pursue the growth or expansion of certain activity areas or outcomes, funding considerations and targeted analysis will be necessary.

More generally, NAAF provides the federal government with a highly cost-effective means of achieving many departmental and government-wide priorities and commitments regarding Aboriginal Peoples. Several factors contribute to this experience including NAAF's strong reputation with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples alike, NAAF's network of Aboriginal stakeholders, NAAF's strong relationships with appropriate private sector partners, NAAF's history of success in the area of Aboriginal social development, and, finally, NAAF's current skills base and capacity for performing high-quality work in the field. For the federal government to have a mechanism of such capability and proficiency available for use in pursuing its own objectives represents a considerable cost-savings over providing the services on its own or even through an alternative organization. This is a considerable advantage provided to the federal government in terms of value-for-money.